

A History of the Australian Typographical  
Societies and The Printing Industry  
Employees' Union of Australia, 1850- 1927.

by  
J.S. Hagan

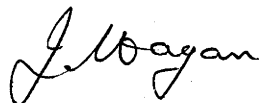
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This thesis is however my own work, and I bear sole responsibility for it.



J. Hagan.



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## INTRODUCTION : SOURCES AND THEIR USE

This thesis sets out to describe and explain the behaviour of Australian typographical unions as institutions between 1850 and 1927. Briefly, it holds that the behaviour of the unions was influenced chiefly by the following, though with varying emphasis at different times:

1. The general state of the economy, and the economic condition of the printing industry.
2. The technology of the printing industry.
3. The unions' relations with other labour unions and political parties, and the influence of political ideas on their members.
4. The unions' relations with the organizations of master printers.
5. The operation of state machinery, especially wages boards and arbitration courts.
6. The inheritance of craft tradition, theories of action, and the ideal of superior social status.

The principal sources for each of these variables, and the main considerations affecting their use were as follows:

1. The general state of the economy, and the economic condition of the industry.

Investigation of the growth of the economy as a whole is beyond the scope of this thesis. It takes as data the information of two main sources : T.A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, N.G. Butlin, Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing, 1861-1938/39 . From the latter it has taken the measure of Gross Domestic Production (deflated) as a convenient index to changes in the level of economic activity. The thesis makes a more detailed investigation of the economic condition of the printing industry, since this is a constant cogent determiner of the unions' tactics.

For the years after 1900, information on the development of the printing industry is not difficult to come by. The Statistical Registers of the States are the best single statistical source; however, they do present some difficulties of interpretation. The government statisticians changed their methods of classification, and the occupational breakdown in N.S.W. and Victoria is more detailed than in the other states. Supplementary information helps round the picture out, and this comes mainly from the Reports of factory inspectors, and from the state censuses of 1901 and the Commonwealth censuses of 1911 and 1921.

More difficult than finding information about the growth of the industry is the establishing, with any precision, of the changes in the level of unemployment in it at any one time. Censuses give information about the number in the printing industry that was unemployed on the day of the census, and the length of time that they had been unemployed. The censuses, however, are ten years apart, and their occupational breakdown is not always adequate. After 1912, Labour Reports give a quarterly

measure of unemployment in each industry based on trade union returns; but it is not clear what the term 'unemployed' means in this context.<sup>1</sup> The same can be said of the statements made by the secretaries of the unions from time to time in the Australasian Typographical Journals and the Printing Trades Journal. Occasionally, they were induced to make more precise statements before Royal Commissions.

Though there are some difficulties in establishing how the printing industry grew after the nineties, these are slight compared with the difficulties presented by the earlier period. The principal sources remain the Statistical Registers and the censuses. In N.S.W., the Statistical Register began to provide information about the printing industry in 1863, but this was limited to getting out the number of steam printing presses according to administrative districts. The Registers made no subdivision of the industry whatsoever until the mid-seventies, when some information on the number of hands employed first begins to appear. After the appointment of T.A. Coghlan as State Statistician in 1886, the Registers add wages data, and begin a far more useful occupational break-down and classification of the type of printing establishment.

Statistical treatment of the industry did not develop so quickly in Victoria, and the other colonies lagged a good deal further behind still. Business directories from the fifties supply information (sometimes of doubtful quality) about the number of firms in the printing trade, but tell little else about them. Enquiries from the Age and the Sydney Morning Herald on nineteenth-century circulation elicited courteous replies but little concrete evidence. Commissions of Enquiry into Tariffs yield some information but almost

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<sup>1</sup> On this point see the article by Colin Forster in the Economic Record, September 1965.

without exception this is descriptive only, and of course, coloured by the particular interest of the witness.

Information on unemployment is entirely limited to subjective description, except for the period 1890-93, for which the Unemployment Register of the N.S.W.T.A. has survived. The results of its analysis appear in Appendix A.

## 2. The Technology of the Printing Industry

For even the most rudimentary analysis of the unions' records, some knowledge of the principal processes of the composing room, foundry, machine room and bindery is necessary. This is easy enough to acquire for the period after the introduction of the linotype machine, since all the techniques developed early in this period are still in use. Dating the introduction of the processes and tracing their spread is more difficult, but trade circulars put out by printers' brokers and ink manufacturers survive in almost unbroken series after 1900. Moreover, the period is still largely within living memory; men who began their apprenticeship in the late nineties still survive in each of the capital cities. In assessing the reliability of their evidence, it seems reasonable to accept as true what has been attested by more than one. Those who have helped in supplying evidence about the trade have been acknowledged at the beginning of the thesis.

The trade before the Linotype is beyond memory, and few of its techniques survive. Literary sources exist, but they are of limited value. The Reverend John Southward was the most eminent British authority in printing in the late nineteenth century, and his Modern Printing was adopted as a text by the Melbourne Workingmen's College at the turn of the century. How far the processes described by him (or by the writers in the Inland Printer, and the British and

Colonial Printer, magazines well-known to printers in the eighties and after) were applied in Australia was settled in three main ways.

The first was through examination of writing on Australian techniques before 1890. These were so slight as to be of practically no help whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> The second was by assembling and classifying all references to printing culled from advertisements (principally in magazines and directories) and from stray references to printing techniques in the Australasian Typographical Journal and two short-lived trade magazines.<sup>2</sup> In this connection the Indent Books of the N.S.W. Government Printer also proved valuable. The third was the more elaborate technique of arranging a chronologically representative series of printing productions and examining their flaws and defects. Since the deficiencies of various processes are known, it becomes possible to establish the use of a process by their presence; thus 'emulsion waver' can establish the application of photographic techniques, and so on. Expert investigation was made by individual members of the union, and by technical college instructors; the results of their work have been incorporated in the thesis, and they are acknowledged individually below.

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1

These were J. Degotardi, The Art of Printing, Sydney, c.1860, and two articles on Australian printing in the Melbourne Argus in 1864. Degotardi did not make clear which of the processes he describes were actually in use in Australia. The Argus articles were concerned almost entirely with newspaper printing.

2

These were The Colonial Printers' Art Journal which was published in Sydney in 1882, and Cowan's which appeared irregularly in the early nineties. The former is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, the latter in the National Library, Canberra. The Mitchell Library also holds some work specimen books of the N.S.W. Government Printer, and a small pamphlet which gives an account of his office in the eighties.



3. The unions' relations with other labour unions and political parties, and the influence of political ideas on their members

There is only one academic history of an Australian trade union in print - R.A. Gollan's, Coalminers of N.S.W. - and it covers only part of the period of the thesis, and in one state only. It is necessary therefore to fall back on three kinds of sources:

(a) General accounts of the labour movement. The most substantial are those in T.A. Coghlan's, Labour and Industry and R.A. Gollan's Radical and Working Class Politics. Some general accounts (e.g. Norton's, History of Labour and Capital) offer accounts of typographical unions which proved highly inaccurate where they could be checked.

(b) Theses. These are general accounts of the labour movement, and most of them cover only short periods in single states. Some of these too, are inaccurate in detail.

(c) Minutes of the N.S.W. Trades and Labour Council, and Melbourne Trades Hall Council. These are no substitute for histories of individual unions, but they do provide some important information about the relations between typographical societies and other city unions.

Thus, while it is possible to shape the history of the typographical societies in such a way as to suggest relationships between their behaviour and those of other Australian unions, it is not possible yet to make any definitive statements.

4. The unions' relations with the organizations of master printers

These bodies had only a fitful existence until the

establishment of arbitration courts and wages boards, but have had a continuous existence under one name or another ever since. Neither of the present organizations - the Printing and Allied Trades Employers' Federation (P.A.T.E.F.) and the Printing and Allied Trades Employers' Association (P.A.T.E.A.) - were prepared to allow free access to records. P.A.T.E.F. permitted the reading of certain documents of its selection on its premises, and claimed the right to censor notes taken. P.A.T.E.A. permitted the microfilming of certain documents of its selection. Among these were the Minutes of its parent organizations, complete except for the years 1914-1919, and uncensored.

Generally speaking, these added little to what can be learned about the master printers' relations with the unions from the unions' own records. So far as the unions are concerned, the master printers' minutes set out for the most part, only a bare record of decisions does little more than confirm correspondence and report items in the unions' minutes. Sometimes they fail to do even this, since the entries refer only to 'considerable discussion' and a decision to leave the matter in somebody's hands. The master printers' habit of referring policy discussions on industrial matters to sub-committees whose minutes are unavailable makes further investigation impossible.

P.A.T.E.A. also made available for microfilming Reports of the Interstate Conventions of organizations of master printers, 1910-13 and 1925-27. These are also to be found in Wimble's Reminder, a trade journal whose file is still kept by F.W. Wimble at their Braybrook (Victoria) factory. Some of these accounts were apparently censored by the convention authorities, but what remains often gives vigorous expression to the attitude of some master printers towards the unions.

Both the Australian National Library and the Mitchell Library held some material on master printers' organizations. The most useful material in the National Library collection is a series of pamphlets by Mr. N. Sapsford, the virtual founder of the Typothetae system in Australia. The Mitchell Library holds a fairly complete set of the Queensland Master Printers' Association's Bulletin for the years 1920-1929, and it provides information which permits a clearer understanding of the role of the Joint Industrial Council than do the union records alone.

5. The operation of state machinery, especially wages board and arbitration courts

After 1900, all the typographical unions had to cope with the determinations and awards that these bodies made. Most of these are still readily available in various government publications. For N.S.W., the most important sources are the Industrial Gazette, and Industrial Arbitration Reports and Records. Other states have equivalent publications for most of the period 1900-1927. Factory Inspectors Reports (notably those of Queensland and Victoria) give useful information on the working of determinations and awards in the printing trade.

The actual proceedings of the arbitration courts are less readily available. The Commonwealth Industrial Registrar holds transcripts of cases heard in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, and grants free access. The N.S.W. State Archivist holds transcripts of cases heard before the State Arbitration Court and the Industrial Appeals Court, and is similarly liberal. In Victoria, the Department of Labour and Industry holds some correspondence which relates to determinations of the printing wages board, but the boards themselves appear to have kept no record of

their proceedings. This also seems to have been true of proceedings before the South Australian board for the printing industry.

6. The inheritance of craft tradition, theories of action, and the ideal of superior social status.

For this kind of information, an Australian scholar has to rely on published secondary sources and on overseas contacts who are prepared to microfilm theses and source documents for him. Three histories of British Typographical Unions are available in Australia. They are institutional histories of the older type, and they are not concerned directly with these problems. Very often however, their inferential testimony was most useful. Of the theses available, one was supplied by the author, and the other two were microfilmed by London University. These dealt more directly with the questions of craft tradition and theories of action. The St. Bride's Library, London, also supplied on microfilm a miscellany of documents, and some of these were of help.

These same sources were the most useful ones available also for comparing the behaviour of Australian typographical unions with British. Their particular deficiencies in this regard have been noted in the thesis.

\* \* \*

Information from the sources so far reviewed largely provided the context for interpretation of the union records themselves. These had first to be collected. The P.I.E.U.A. itself has kept its records complete since 1916, and the Victorian and South Australian branches have kept nearly all their major books of record since their foundation.

In all the other State Branches of the P.I.E.U.A. there were serious gaps in the records that the branches actually kept in their offices. On one occasion, a careful search of the trades hall basement was rewarding; an abandoned printers' storeroom yielded up an excellent collection of records that the N.S.W.T.A. had compiled between 1880 and 1916. Otherwise, the collection was supplemented by past members of the union who volunteered or were persuaded to donate records in their keeping.<sup>1</sup> Major libraries in Australia held no union documents of any consequence that were not duplicates of material obtainable elsewhere. No records for the transient versions of the N.S.W.T.A. that existed before 1850 could be traced.

The principal union records can be grouped under the following headings

- Records of meetings
- Membership records
- Financial records
- Unemployment records
- Journals
- Reports
- Letter files
- Rule books

The last two call for no comment, except to say that letter files were scarce, but the rule book series was almost complete. The other sources require more detailed comment.

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<sup>1</sup> A second-hand shop in Sydney contributed the Sydney Morning Herald Chapel Minutes, 1849-60.

### Records of meetings

These are principally the minute books of meetings of boards of management and general meetings. The boards of management deal with the more routine matters; the general meetings with all important matters of policy. Together, the minute books provide the most copious source of information about the union as an institution. Their weaknesses as source material are many. Some secretaries were poor minute-takers; sometimes they wrote to conceal rather than enlighten; sometimes they wrote to calumniate or incriminate; and confirmation of minutes might demonstrate no more than that members have bad memories, or that the secretary belonged to a majority faction. The secretary's account is virtually uncheckable except for the rare instances in which the press published an account (which is not itself necessarily accurate or unbiassed). Members and ex-members who volunteered information about meetings laboured under the disability of having to draw on memory over forty years old.

### Membership records

Some subscription books were gathered, but these proved quite inadequate to building up any continuous picture of membership. The P.I.E.U.A. holds files of membership applications only for 1916 and the years after. The best sources of information on membership are the yearly and half-yearly reports, which usually, but not always, quote membership figures. They fail most consistently to quote them in times of membership decline; and when they do quote them, they do not always distinguish between 'mortuary', 'honorary', 'financial', and 'unfinancial' members. Moreover, the series of half-yearly reports is itself incomplete. It is not possible to construct a detailed membership table, but it is possible to use the figures to help assess the unions' bargaining strength from time to time.

### Financial records

There are some cash books among the union records, but these are not sufficient for the making of any overall assessment of unions' funds. A good general view of each unions' finances can be got from the balance sheets published with the half-yearly or yearly reports. Although some of them are missing, and the information they give is sometimes not very specific, they are nonetheless handy indicators of the unions' financial health, and therefore help evaluate the bargaining position. More detailed records of unions' strikefinances have survived, and they permit fairly precise assessment of unions' finance in these critical periods.

### Unemployment records

Very few unemployment records have survived. Only in the records of two societies did the conjunction of adequate unemployment and membership records make possible the calculation of reasonably precise unemployment rates for different sections of the trade. The results of this work are in Appendix A. Otherwise, the union records yielded information on unemployment that is highly subjective. The authors of trade reports in the A.T.J. had an interest in creating a gloomy picture, and in any case it is difficult to attach much meaning to words like 'dull', 'slack', or 'bad'. Even when the reports quote so many men as being 'unemployed', it is not possible to know how that term is being used.

### Journals

The typographical unions have published three journals which have appeared for any substantial time: the Australian Typographical Circular (1858-60), the Australasian Typographical

Journal (1871-1916), which became the Printing Trades Journal (1916), and the Printer (1923-1955). A full run of each of these journals is available.

The journals fill most of their pages with short accounts of board and general meetings. But they also carry technical articles from time to time, and letters, death notices, and obituaries. The letters and obituaries are the principal source of information on the opinions and social life of nineteenth century compositors. The evidence is largely impressionistic, but it is good enough to reinforce other available evidence about the compositors' attitudes to skilled and unskilled workers, and unions and non-unionists. It also gives an index of social mobility, and a measure of the strength of the self-improvement ethic.

The obituaries and death notices also usually supply date and place of birth, and cause of death. For the years prior to 1916, they are the only source of this information, information on place of birth is too fragmentary to permit any worthwhile conclusions to be drawn about the proportion of members of the unions who were born in the colonies.

The information on cause of death and age at death promised to be more useful. Nineteenth century compositors always claimed that workers in their craft did not live as long as those in others, since the dust of composing rooms predisposed them to 'phthisis' or 'consumption'. They claimed higher wages as part compensation, and could therefore be assumed to have been fairly diligent in reporting deaths from these causes in the journals. But no amount of analysis of the statistics available can prove or deny the compositors' claim. Quite apart from the objections that can be made to the sample, there is no comparable information available for other trades, and



neither the censuses nor the records of insurance companies provide the information necessary to compare death rates from phthisis among compositors of selected age groups with death rates from the same disease in the general population of the same age groups. On the advice of the Department of Demography at the Australian National University, the project was abandoned.

## SYNOPSIS

The prosperity of the colonial printing industry in the gold rushes of the fifties offered migrant British compositors very high wages and the opportunity to succeed in business as master printers. Their sense of craft and social distinction strengthened, and they worked earnestly at self-improvement. Their typographical societies held aloof from other trade unions, and discarded strike action for co-operation with the 'fair' employer.

As the gold discoveries ceased to stimulate the economy, the compositor's sense of distinction waned. Respectable and industrious men out of work for long periods began to feel less in sympathy with their masters and more akin to other workmen. Typographical societies began to rely less on the 'fair' employer, and more on the power of the strike. By the early eighties they were leaders of the trade union movement in three capital cities.

After two heavy defeats in strikes of their own, the societies were ready to see the Great Strikes of the nineties as struggles between Capital and Labour. But the unions were defeated, the century's worst depression settled on the land, the introduction of the Linotype machine reduced the number of newspaper compositors by more than half, and a revolution in printing styles faced those in the jobbing offices. Nearly all the typographical societies survived the nineties, but with only a fraction of their former power. The trade union movement itself had almost collapsed; in their need the societies sought help from the new State

arbitration bodies.

This reliance went far to prevent a revival of militancy in those societies that committed themselves most to arbitration procedure. Before the First World War, compositors managed to establish considerable industrial privilege, and some of them became once more the best paid of all wage earners. They sought to avoid alliances that might have involved them in strike action, because this perhaps would have meant the loss of the State's protection for their awards and agreements. Their reluctance to participate in working class politics was strengthened by a revival of the self-improvement tradition. Though the societies added sections of less privileged workers to their membership at this time, effective political control remained in the hands of those who represented the more privileged typographical workers.

It was these men who were most powerful in forming The Printing Industry Employees' Union of Australia in 1916. Most of them sought the creation of a national union for reasons of tactical advantage rather than for any reasons of mass trade union politics; and some of them at least sought it as a means of escape from alliances with more militant printing unions. But it was impossible for the P.I.E.U.A. to avoid some common action with other unions or to remain unaffected by the forces that contributed to the industrial turmoil of the half-dozen years after 1916. The Union's policy hovered uncertainly between arbitration and direct action, between concern for the conservation of privilege and commitment to working class policies.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.L.F.	Australian Labour Federation
<u>A.P.</u>	<u>Australasian Printer</u>
<u>A.T.C.</u>	<u>Australian Typographical Circular</u>
<u>A.T.J.</u>	<u>Australasian Typographical Journal</u>
A.T.U.	Australasian Typographical Union
<u>C.A.R.</u>	<u>Commonwealth Arbitration Reports</u>
<u>C.L.R.</u>	<u>Commonwealth Law Reports</u>
G.P.O.	Government Printing Office
L.M.U.	Letterpress Machinists' Union
L.S.C.	London Society of Compositors
M.P.A.	Master Printers' Association
M.T.S.	Melbourne Typographical Society
N.S.W.T.A.	New South Wales Typographical Association
N.A.T.S.O.P.A.	National Society of Operative Printers' Assistants.
N.T.A.	National Typographical Association
P.I.E.U.A.	Printing Industry Employees' Union of Australia
P.L.L.	Political Labor League
P.M.M.T.S.	Printing Machine Managers' Trade Society
P.T.A.	Provincial Typographical Association
P.T.G.W.U.	Printing Trades General Workers' Union
P.T.F.C.	Printing Trades Federation Council
<u>P.T.J.</u>	<u>Printing Trades Journal</u>
Q.T.A.	Queensland Typographical Association
S.A.T.A.	South Australian Typographical Association
S.T.A.	Scottish Typographical Association
T.A.	Typographical Association
V.M.P.A.	Victorian Master Printers' Association

V.T.A.	Victoria Typographical Association
V.T.S.	Victorian Typographical Society
V.T.U.	Victorian Typographical Union
W.A.T.I.U.	Western Australian Typographical Industrial Union
W.I.U.A.	Workers' Industrial Union of Australia

CHAPTER ONE  
CRAFT AND TRADITION

The British printers who formed the first typographical unions in Australia brought with them the standards, conventions and myths that their trade had gathered over almost four centuries. The earliest of these belonged to the time before the industrial revolution; from this period printers derived their tradition as a group with a special position in society due to them as men of education and skill. Other traditions were shorter lived, but very strong. They belonged to the time of industrial revolution, and had to do with the means of preserving a privileged position for printing craftsmen in a rapidly changing age.

'The Art and Mystery of Printing'

William Caxton, who set up a press in London in 1476, introduced to England the art and mystery of printing from movable type. For the next 300 years his methods endured without important change. It was not until the eighteenth century that England produced any notable experimenters in the art, and then these men were type-founders and block-makers, more concerned with the beauty of type and illustration than with the means of making impression on paper. The best English printers settled down to develop their craft within the limits that Caxton had set. Although they succeeded in raising output of their presses, their skills remained of the same kind.

These were the skills of composing type, working it off at press, and reading the proof for correction. The printers of the early sixteenth century were masters of them all. Only later, and in the larger printing shops, did men specialize as compositors, pressmen, and correctors of the press.<sup>1</sup>

Working as a compositor, the printer stood before a frame which supported a case into whose compartments a complete set of type of a particular style and size - called a fount<sup>2</sup> - had been distributed. His left hand held the stick, a small tray open at one end with a side that could be screwed in or out to suit the measure of the lines to be set. His right forefinger and thumb picked type from the case, and placed it in the tray from left to right. When the letters of the first line were assembled in order, the compositor had then to space it, and read for errors. This done, he placed a small metal rule against this first line of set type to give himself a smooth edge, and began to set the second. He continued this way until the stick was full of type; then he glanced over it quickly again - and minded his p's and q's! Once corrected, the type was transferred into a larger tray called a galley, and successive stickfuls of type were added in order.

This completed the actual type-setting, a process which demanded not only a high degree of dexterity but for good work, an aesthetically discriminating eye. Almost from the time movable type was first used it was the practice to 'justify', that is, to make the end of a word coincide with the end of a line; and where this

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1

The contemporary Australian term is 'reader'.

2

In Australia, now always pronounced 'font'.

proved impossible without producing unsightly gaps or cramming the words together, to break the word syllabically. This required a nicely judged use of spaces between words, so that the gaps between them appeared equal, even though this was geometrically impossible because the spacing material was of three or four fixed sizes only. Skilful compositors counted it a matter of pride to make not only the spaces between the words in any one line appear equal, but to maintain this illusion of even spacing throughout the book. This they managed to achieve by turning some of the better known optical illusions to practical effect.

Type assembled on the galleys had to be divided into separate pages, and once again conventions grew up as to the proper way of doing this. It was considered bad practice to make a page whose only letterpress amounted to two or three lines, or to begin a new page with the short line that ended a paragraph. To avoid this, the compositor who assembled type from the galleys had often to be subtle in his use of the larger spacing material that separated lines or paragraphs. This done, he imposed the type on the smooth surface of the stone. This involved him in two operations. First, he had to arrange his type in such a way that when the large sheet printed from it was cut, the pages of the book would appear in their proper order, with uniform margins and a due allowance of blank paper for binding. Next, by using a system of wedges and a frame called a chase he locked it together with such nicely judged pressure that the type and spacing material could neither wobble nor spring out under the pressures which would be applied to it. The resulting forme was ready for the press.



Until the nineteenth century the only presses were of the screw-jack type, made of wood. The man working at press placed the forme in the bed, beat the type with leather balls thick with ink, placed paper and tympan over the type, cranked the bed into position, and screwed down the platen. He then screwed up the platen, withdrew the bed, raised the tympan, took off the printed sheet, and hung it on the line to dry. Generally, two pressmen shared these tasks between them, and a hard working and skilful pair using a good eighteenth century press could produce about 2000 sheets printed on one side in a ten hour day.<sup>1</sup>

As with composing, there was more to good press work than at first met the eye. An even impression of type on the page was the result, not of an even pressure, but of a discriminatingly uneven pressure that compensated for worn or badly cast type. To achieve this, the man working at press had to 'make ready', by either padding the under side of the forme or the top side of the tympan in certain places. He had also to command other mysteries. The pressure of his pull on the platen had to be gauged so that the type just bit into the paper but did not show through on the other side. His ink had to be thick enough to produce a solid black, but not so thick that it picked up knap from the paper, and clogged the face of the type. The type had to register its impression on the paper sheets in exactly the right position.

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The printed sheets were often taken off by a boy, called a 'fly-boy' - perhaps from the way the sheet seemed to 'fly' from the type when the tympan was lifted. Another explanation is that he became known as a 'fly-boy' because by the end of the day he was covered with black ink, though this condition would seem better to explain the origin of the term 'printer's devil' - c.f. 'black as the devil'.

Bad press work could ruin the appearance of well composed matter, but errors undetected in work that was technically perfect could bankrupt the printer.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the first sheet worked off the press was always examined most carefully as a 'proof' that the matter had been set correctly - and if it had not, corrections were made in the forme. It also became the custom to pull 'proofs' from the galleys before they were imposed on the forme, corrections at the galley stage being much cheaper.

These processes still remain basic to all letterpress printing, although they have been modified, subdivided and supplemented many times since. The earliest printers - men who worked at both case and press as required and did their own correcting - were men who required great skill and some education, and this helps to explain their high social standing. In an age when most workmen were illiterate, printers could not only read, but also spell, and often had some knowledge of languages other than their own. About 1600, over one-third of all books printed in England were in Latin and Greek, and a good many of those published in the vernacular made some use of these languages. He who would master his trade also needed a knowledge of mathematical symbols, and of punctuation and grammar.

This combination of technical skill with broad education was difficult to achieve, but specialization within the trade made it unnecessary for all printers to be such paragons. Moxon's Mechanick Exercises, published in 1683 gives us the most comprehensive view of the trade

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The most sensational example of this is the misprint in the 'Wicked' Bible of 1681. The word 'not' is omitted from the seventh commandment.

in the seventeenth century, and by his time, printing in the larger shops had become a business for men specialized as compositors, pressmen, and correctors of the press.

Besides specialization, other trends were at work that made printing a less demanding occupation. One was a steady rise in the quantity of vernacular printing done in the seventeenth century, so that a compositor might know no Latin or Greek, and yet find his skill adequate. The other was a decline in the level of technical skill required. Tracts, broadsides and pamphlets are ephemera that are rarely well printed, and the political and religious troubles of the Tudor and Stuart periods determined that these should be ages of tracts and pamphlets. In the peculiar conditions of the seventeenth century printing trade the standard of book printing also sank so that fewer demands were made on the skill and knowledge of the craftsman.

But the social standing of printers does not seem to have suffered, or if it did, it recovered very quickly. Just over half of the London apprentices to printing who took up indentures in the years 1718-23 were sons of parents whose occupations stood higher than those of artisans in the social scale. Just under half of the apprentices were sons of artisans, and only four were the sons of those whose occupations were of lower rank. A large proportion of fathers paid premiums to have their sons taught 'the art and mystery' of printing, and although £10 was the sum most frequently paid, payments ranged up to £105. Fathers in the 'above-artisan' group most frequently paid high premiums.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I.C. Cannon, 'The Social Situation of the Skilled Worker' Ph.D. thesis, London, 1961, pp.20-4

### Trade Customs in the Days of the Stationers' Company

The indentures of the apprentice had to be registered at Stationers' Hall, the offices of the Stationers' Company. This body had received its royal charter in 1557, and although it was Tudor economic policy to grant monopoly charters, fear of sedition also prompted control of the printing industry. Publication was to be licenced, and the Company's members were to have sole right to publish licensed titles. Thus the Government and the members of the Stationers' Company had a common interest in routing out unauthorised printing - one for reasons of political security, the other for reasons of business. The Court of the Stationers' Company became an agency of the State, supervising the affairs of the Company in accordance with its own policy and whatever directions it received from government departments. It issued regulations which limited the number of presses a printer might have, and controlled the manufacture of type. No printed matter could be imported without its permission. Printers doing unlicensed work were hunted down with enthusiasm, their presses burnt and their types melted down. So protected, many of those Company members who had larger establishments became very rich men.

The Company however was concerned with the welfare of journeymen as well as masters, and here again the interests of State and stationer coincided. Unemployed or impoverished printers were more likely to succumb to the temptation of printing seditious work, for a price - or pirate copyrights which rightfully belonged to other members of the Company. The Court therefore limited the entry of apprentices and fixed wage rates. It accepted responsibility for enforcing payment of proper wages, maintaining full employment and relieving its members in old age and sickness. As a

fraternal body, it heard petitions from journeymen printers on these matters, and sometimes acted on them.<sup>1</sup> Fifty years later the Court's authority was enforced by that of the Star Chamber. Alarmed at the extent of 'secret printing in corners' it required master printers to take on any one journeyman who offered his services, whether he had work for him or not.

Some regulation of affairs between masters and men might also have been undertaken by the Chapels. Chapels are unique to the printing trade, and have existed almost since the craft began. Moxon in 1683 referred to 'the Chapel' as being established in every printing house 'by the Custom of Time out of mind', and set out its Rules in his Mechanick Exercises. There is little in Moxon's Rules to suggest an organisation designed to represent the interests of men in dispute with their master. Some of the Rules had to do with the smooth running of the office - drunkenness, or playing at quadrats earnt a penalty;<sup>2</sup> but for the most part, they seemed to

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<sup>1</sup> In response to complaints by journeymen, the Court of the Stationers' Company in 1587 issued Certen orders concerning printinge which required that 'no formes of letters be kept standing to the prejudice of the workmen at any time', limited the number of copies that could be printed of any book without re-setting the type, and prohibited the employment of an apprentice at case or press if a journeyman was unemployed.

<sup>2</sup> 'Quadrats' was a tossing game played with types which damaged their faces. Older members of the trade still remember this game as 'jeffing'.

to have had a mainly social purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The Chapel helped knit printers into a distinctive social group, and geography strengthened this trend. In 1724, of the 103 printing offices in England, 75 were in London. These were mostly larger than the provincial offices, and the great majority of them were in an area of about two square miles between St. Paul's and the Tower - an area very well supplied with public houses. This facilitated combination of journeymen against their masters, and such combination did occur, but in the eighteenth century it seems to have been temporary and occasional.<sup>2</sup>

There seem to have been at least two good reasons why Chapels did not develop far in this direction until later. First, because journeymen and master were members of the one Company and subject to the same Court. Second, because the Court was for the most part efficient enough in the discharge of its responsibilities towards journeymen

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<sup>1</sup> Offences like swearing, or making weak puns (to which compositors seem especially addicted) were punishable by 'solacing' - a beating across the buttocks - but in practice the solace was bought off by a donation to Chapel funds. Newcomers had to undergo an initiation ceremony, and pay entrance money, or 'benvenue'. Other events - the birth of a son, or marriage - required that a 'fine' be paid to the Chapel treasury, and revenue from all these sources was used for Chapel celebrations. The best known of these was one the Chapel did not pay for at all. This was the 'way goose' (later spelt 'wayzgoose') a feast that the Master was expected to provide each year 'about Bartholomew-tide'. There were other less formal celebrations, e.g. the 'welcoming' of a wife to the Chapel. Benjamin Franklin, a teetotal compositor, complained that the Chapel spent most of its funds on grog.

<sup>2</sup> S. and B. Webb, The History of Trades Unionism, London, 1919, p.27, and Cannon, 'Social Situation of the Skilled Worker', pp.27-9.

to secure them a high wage. Information on wages paid is slight, but Cannon is satisfied that towards the end of the seventeenth century when wage data first becomes definite enough to allow some comparisons to be made, it was possible for printers to earn wages well above the average for artisans, and what little evidence there is suggests that this had been so for a long time.

But by the end of the seventeenth century the influence of the Stationers' Company was starting to decline. In 1695, the Licensing Act was allowed to lapse, and with it, the legislative sanction for disciplinary action by the Court. Other forces were at work, notably the spread of newspaper and magazine publication, over which the Company had no control. Centres of printing outside London expanded, and by the 1720s every important town in England had its newspaper. In the general trade expansion of the eighteenth century, political opinion began to react increasingly against a government control of industry through monopoly and restriction.

Although the fortunes of the Company began their decline from about 1700, those of the journeyman printer did not. Fine printing revived - this was the age of Bewick, Caslon and Baskerville - and the printing of learned works expanded as well.

Wages remained high, and printers generally earnt more than most artisans, with probability that some of them earnt more than any other grades of labour.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cannon has calculated that in the third quarter of the nineteenth century most printers earnt between 24 and 30 shillings when the average for all artisans was 19 shillings.

Unemployment was low. In London, the Company continued to register apprentices; in the provinces, the increasing number of new entrants beyond the Company's reach were absorbed by the expansion of the industry.

As late as 1770, the printer was still what he had been for almost three centuries - an aristocrat of labour able to earn higher wages than his brother artisans who occupied a place somewhere between the artisans and their superiors, being marked off from the former by the greater education required, and close enough to the latter for him to feel able to apprentice his sons to printing. At a time when other crafts had not developed equivalent organisations Chapels as associations for printers only tended to reinforce this feeling of distinction. Printers a century later were often to look back on this period as a 'golden age', and to invoke as guides in their present troubles the principles on which this prosperity seemed to have rested; a recognition of the identity of interest between master and journeymen, and the regulation of matters between them by means of an impartial State authority.

#### The 'Economic Revolution' and the Printer's Craft

By this time, the rate of expansion of the printing industry was beginning to accelerate rapidly. In 1661, there were 70 printing offices in England; 60 years later, only 5 more, 60 years later again, over 50 more. Then in the 23 years from 1785 to 1808 the number increased by 92; in the next 18 years, by 107. Thirty years later (1856) there were 100 more again.

The numbers of newspapers and books published also rose spectacularly. In 1801, the combined circulation of England's newspapers was about 15,000,000; in 1853



72,000,000. In 1828, the number of new titles published was 1104; in 1853, 2934. By 1832, the Penny Magazine had achieved a circulation of about 200,000, and by 1854, at least five periodicals had a circulation of over a million.<sup>1</sup>

This huge and sudden growth of the printing industry followed upon other industrial and commercial expansion which steadily increased the demand for catalogues, printed packaging, cardboard display, posters and receipt books to the extent where jobbing - the old, poor and ugly sister of the book trade - finally began to win a fortune for herself. Wars, controversy, increasing literacy, political campaigning and evangelism stimulated the production of newspapers, and periodicals; falling costs contributed to the expansion of all classes of printing. The cost of paper fell rapidly after the introduction of paper making machines. Lower freight charges, the introduction of the penny post and the abolition of the 'taxes on knowledge',<sup>2</sup> all helped lower the cost of printed products to the consumer. Concurrent with these changes was a revolution in the existing printing process that both cheapened production and extended its variety. There also developed an entirely new method of printing.

For more than three hundred years, commercial printing had been done exclusively by the letterpress process, wherein an impression on paper was made by ink from a type face cast in relief. About 1798, Alois Senefelder perfected an entirely new method called the lithographic process, which was chemical rather than

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<sup>1</sup>These figures have been gathered from Cannon, 'The Social Situation of the Skilled Worker', chapter II, pp.31-2.

<sup>2</sup>The 'taxes on knowledge' were advertisement duty (repealed in 1853) newspaper stamp duty (repealed 1855) and paper duty (repealed 1861).

mechanical in principle. Lithography was based on the discovery that certain kinds of limestone absorbed moisture thoroughly and uniformly, but would repel moisture if coated with a greasy preparation. To turn this discovery to advantage for printing, it was only necessary to draw inversely on the stone with a greasy crayon whatever was to be reproduced. The stone would absorb water only in those parts where there was no crayon, and when ink was applied it would cling to the crayon only, since water repels ink. Pressure applied to the back of paper laid on the stone transferred the image, and several hundred impressions could be taken off in this way. At the end of this time, the lithographer could re-grain his stone, and prepare it for printing again.

From its beginning, lithography carved out a special place for itself as a simple means of printing what would have required the making of a 'block' in letterpress - a much more expensive process if reproduction of any complexity was required. It was quickly applied to the printing of maps and line drawings; in combination with coloured inks, it could reproduce 'flowers of the brightest hue, the chromatic shades of the butterfly, shells...the various shapes and appearances of contagious diseases, anatomical sections, (and)...paintings of the greatest masters.'<sup>1</sup> It later found a less exalted purpose in the printing of coloured labels for jam tins and of foils for display packaging.

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<sup>1</sup>J. Degotardi, The Art of Printing, Sydney, 1861, pp.7-8

By this time, lithographers were looking ahead to new prospects with the application to their art of photographic methods which eliminated the need for drawing on the printing surface, overcame the problems of increasing or diminishing scale of the image to be printed and greatly facilitated the reproduction of intricate detail. In photo-lithography, the image was exposed onto a sensitized stone, and so fixed that it took on a greasy quality attractive to ink, whereas the rest of the surface when moistened with water, repelled it.<sup>1</sup>

Although lithographic printing expanded rapidly, its application was limited almost entirely to the reproduction of colour and illustration. The great mass of printing remained concerned with the reproduction of words, and for this there was no rival to the letter-press process. Methods of composition remained the same, but in response to the need for constantly increasing production, the size, shape and principle of the printing press completely altered.

Lord Stanhope made the first important structural change to Caxton's press for three hundred years when about 1790 he substituted iron for wood in its construction. Iron presses were stronger and a little faster, but they still worked in much the same way, the

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<sup>1</sup>It is impossible to assign the invention of photo-lithography to any one person. After the invention of the Daguerrotype process, many men experimented with the problem of transferring an image to a litho. stone photographically, but without any real success until the 1850's, when Lemercier, Asser, James and Osborne all made important contributions. By 1860 the process was a practical one. See J.S. Mertle, 'The Origin and Development of Photo-Lithography' in the Australasian Printer, vol.II, nos.3-4.

platen having to be raised and lowered for each impression. The first change in the principle of the printing press came with the substitution of a circular impression cylinder for the platen. A machine that Koenig and Bauer made for The Times in 1814 had a bed which reciprocated below a revolving impression cylinder. This machine was the ancestor of all subsequent cylinder printing machines, and was notable in at least three other ways: the forme was self-inking, the machine was steam-driven, and it was more than twice as fast as the hand press.

Increasingly faster machines were built for The Times by Applegarth and Cowper who introduced the principle of the rotary press. One of their monsters had its cylinder in a vertical plane, and eight men fed it with sheets of paper from eight different points. But further development of the rotary press was impossible without some adaptation of the stereotype plate.

A Scot, William Ged, is generally credited with the invention of the stereotype process, but his knowledge died with his son. About 1800, London printers seeking to avoid the re-setting of type whose face had been battered by a long run in the press, began again to experiment with stereotype plates. One of them, Alexander Tulloch, in 1802 perfected a process whereby he took an impression in plaster of paris from a forme of type, and cast from the matrix in hot metal. The resulting stereotype plate was far more durable than the original type, and released it for use in another job.

Tulloch's invention was well enough for the printing press and the printing machine, both of which had flat beds, but it was not capable of making plates curved to fit the cylinder of a rotary machine. This problem was

solved by the substitution of 'flong' - a papier mache composition - for plaster of paris in the making of the mould, and then casting from this matrix in a cylinder.

With the introduction of web feeding,<sup>1</sup> the rotary newspaper machine took on its present form. Successive cylinders were fitted with stereo plates and as the web of paper passed through them, it was printed on both sides so that completed sections (or even papers) emerged at the end of the machine. The first press to incorporate all these features was the Walter Press, installed in 1866, and capable of delivering 12,000 eight-page sections each hour. By 1880, machines made by Richard Hoe were counting and stacking whole pages as well as printing them.

This rapid evolution of the rotary press did not mean the supersession of flat-bed and platen machines in all types of work. By 1860, Koenig's flat-bed machine had a most worthy successor in the Wharfedale, a machine that was capable of excellent book printing at about 1000 sheets each hour. Caxton's old platen-type press underwent some radical modifications and emerged by mid-century with a vertical bed and 'clam-shell' action. Powered by treadle, it was cheap, simple and particularly suitable for small job work. By the 1870s most ambitious young printers setting up in business in a small way started with a treadle platen.<sup>2</sup>

Each of these inventions made its own considerable contribution to lowering the cost of printing text. The

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<sup>1</sup>I.e., feeding the machine with paper continuously from a roll, instead of from stacks of individual sheets.

<sup>2</sup>Powered by a gas engine, they were capable of about 2000 impressions an hour, and reduced cost by about 70 per cent on the small jobs previously done on the old Albion and Columbian hand presses.

application of photographic technique to letterpress blockmaking did the same for illustration. By simply developing a photographic negative on a sensitized metal plate, and etching the result with acid, it was possible to reproduce any line drawing in relief. This photo-engraving process<sup>1</sup> began to replace the engraving of wood blocks, a process which had itself undergone considerable adaptation in a search for a quick and cheap method of illustration.

It is easy to exaggerate the speed with which these changes spread through the industry. Even as late as 1850 two-thirds of the printing offices in London employed up to three compositors only, not nearly enough to warrant the purchase of one of the newer, larger machines.<sup>2</sup> The largest printing firm, Clowes, still had 26 hand presses as well as 26 machines, and Eyre and Spottiswoode, a more representative large scale business had 34 hand presses and only 4 machines.<sup>3</sup> But specialization of function ran ahead of technical change as the number of larger firms increased. It became less and less the custom to apprentice boys to both case and press, the new occupations developed within the industry. Lithographers took apprentices from the beginning, but for machine-minding,<sup>4</sup> a highly skilled and responsible job, there was no

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<sup>1</sup>Sometimes called 'process engraving'. There has been considerable looseness in the use of both terms. In this thesis, 'photo-engraving' will be used only to refer to the process here described, and the other term will not be used at all.

<sup>2</sup>Cannon, 'The Social Situation of the Skilled Worker', p.32 These firms accounted for about one-fifth of compositors employed. The mode was ten. Less than a quarter of the firms employed over twenty compositors.

<sup>3</sup>B.W.E. Alford, 'The London Letterpress Printing Industry Ph.D. thesis, London, 1962, p.11.

<sup>4</sup>This term does not survive in Australia. The current equivalent of 'Machine Minder' is 'Rotary Machinist'.

The man who was to become a machine minder prepared for this by spending some time in doing each of the lesser tasks demanded by the big machines. Since their work was unaffected by mechanization in this period, compositors remained by far the largest skilled group within the industry, and with the rapid expansion of newspaper printing, they tended to specialize as news men, or as book men and jobbers.

This specialization represented a division that had grown in the industry. Newspapers were common by 1730, but the mass-circulation daily was a nineteenth century phenomenon. The essence of its production was not tasteful typography, but speed. Since the news that sold best was the news that came latest, scores of formes had to be set, cast, and run off in as short a time as possible. Steam, electricity and the rotary press looked after the actual printing of the paper, but for almost the entire century there was no effective way of speeding the composition of type. By 1850, metropolitan dailies had to employ over a hundred men at a time on hand setting. Piece rates encouraged them to set to the limit of their speed until copy finally cut out. The wages that the fastest of the news men earned were far higher than those earned by their slower and more fastidious brothers in the book and jobbing shops.

In the hectic conditions of the daily newspaper composing room, the Chapel had a special value for both employer and employee. Employers recognised its usefulness in establishing the discipline that was necessary if the paper was going to be produced on time. Employees recognised the tremendous bargaining advantage this situation gave them. Thus Chapels were able to

establish rights fundamental to maintaining the privileges of their members. No one who was not a journeyman could be employed in setting the paper at night; matter difficult to set had to be paid for at penalty rates; and the Chapel piece-work companionship had the right to set the whole paper. If the proprietor chose to use matter set elsewhere, he had to pay the Father of the Chapel as if he had set it. The Father then shared this amount among the Chapel members.<sup>1</sup>

Before 1890, composing machinery presented little threat to the employment of hand compositors in either newspaper or book offices. William Church patented a mechanical type-setting machine as early as 1822, but there seems to have been no machine composing in commercial offices until the 1840s when one or two offices adopted the Young-Delcambre machine. But this machine aroused no enthusiasm among employers. It had to be fed with type by hand, the lines it set had to be justified by hand, and then distributed by hand for further use. Moreover, it broke down frequently, and showed a strong inclination to 'pie' its lines.

Mechanical composition did not become a commercial proposition until the mid-sixties, when the Eastern Morning News at Hull installed machines invented by Robert Hattersley. But the Hattersley machines exhibited many of the vices of the Young-Delcambre machines, and in the next twenty or so years, not more than a score of employers cared to follow the Eastern Morning News' example. Only one London daily installed mechanical type-setting machines in this period,<sup>2</sup> and then its use of them was largely experimental for some years.

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<sup>1</sup>This was known as 'Fat'. In this sense, it means payment for nothing. The penalty payment for difficult setting is also sometimes called 'Fat'.

<sup>2</sup>The Times



## The Early Printing Unions

When the printing craftsmen first began to form their unions, the newspapermen of London formed a society separate from the compositors in the jobbing and book offices. They in turn formed societies separate from those of other printing craftsmen, and this fragmentary process repeated itself throughout the British Isles. A geographic division cut across this occupational one, and the result was a multitude of local craft societies.

The compositors made their first attempt at union in London in 1794, when it became clear that the Stationers' Company had lost all power to regulate the entry of apprentices into the trade. As the number of apprentices continued to multiply through the years of the Napoleonic Wars, the journeymen invoked the Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices; but laissez-faire views now prevailed in Government policy, and almost reluctantly compositors turned to organize their own defence, in a time of increasing unemployment and lower real wages.

The most striking thing about the pronouncements of the embryo unions was their conservative nature. They represented the views of 'an intelligent and relatively well paid aristocracy expressing their disgust at the threat of a revolution in the established relations between master and man'.<sup>1</sup> Those who joined the Societies seemed to have done so mainly in the hope of re-establishing for themselves that position enjoyed by their fathers. There is no suggestion in any of their documents that they claimed as a right their share of the new wealth their industry was generating. They disliked laissez-faire,

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<sup>1</sup>J. Child, 'A History of Industrial Relations in the British Printing Industry', D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1953, p.111.

but they had no plans for an alternative construction of society,<sup>1</sup> nor did their unions develop any interest in such schemes in the next three-quarters of a century. Though quite a few individual compositors and printers became important in Owenite community schemes, the London Working Men's Association, and moral force Chartism, no printing union ever participated officially in any of these movements, or even supported the newspaper co-operatives occasionally formed by some of their members.<sup>2</sup> There was a strong and important radical tradition among compositors, but it never influenced the majority or the union management. Militancy was not lacking - there were plenty of strikes - but there was no radical union policy.

This reluctance of printing unions to adopt a radical, let alone socialist ideology, to enter into politics, or even co-operate to any great extent with their fellow unionists, may be explained partly by the lingering tradition of the compositor's special place in society, and his consequent preference for re-creating a society that was past to constructing one that was still unknown. The behaviour of compositors' wages through the period would have helped to reinforce this view. After suffering a serious fall in value during the Napoleonic Wars, compositors' real wages rose steadily for the next half century as the cost of living declined. Although they were no longer clear wage leaders, compositors in steady employment enjoyed incomes that compared favourably with those of other skilled workers. For most, this and the

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<sup>1</sup>Cannon, op.cit., p.39. Child substantially agrees, even after making specific allowance for the caution that the Combination Acts would have inspired.

<sup>2</sup>See Cannon, 'The Social Situation of the Skilled Worker', pp.62-4. Most of the newspapers published by co-operatives advocated radical reform or social reconstruction.

hope of regaining lost status appears to have been enough, provided unemployment could be kept at bay, and in this union members generally seem to have been more successful than non-union members. But in bad years like 1834, when lost time reduced the compositor's average wage to three-quarters of the ruling rate, unemployment certainly ate well into the core of union members.<sup>1</sup>

The advance of nineteenth century commerce emphasised the seasonal demand for printing, and this alone made some unemployment inevitable. But the industrial revolution tied the printing industry closely to the larger cycle of boom and depression, and added the problem of juvenile labour. The printing industry was more vulnerable to abuse of the latter than most other crafts.

This followed from the greater spread of demand that nineteenth century business made on the compositor's skill. At one end of the scale, there was a continuing demand for good quality book work, and a new and increasing requirement for eye catching types and their skilful disposition for advertisement. At the other, there was far greater demand for solid setting in cheap books, periodicals and handbills. For centuries, the compositor had recognized this class of work as easy setting making little demand on his skill that would earn him a good day's pay on piece rates. Now that neither the Stationers' Company nor any other authority regulated the employment of apprentices, employers began to take on enough boys to do this simpler work. Since boys worked for a fraction of adult rates, journeymen roamed the streets; and when the boys grew into men, they themselves were discharged, unless they were prepared to go on working for low pay.

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<sup>1</sup>Cannon, 'Social Situation of the Skilled Worker', p.42.

To protect their members against this kind of competition, the printing unions had to establish in themselves the authority to regulate the entry of apprentices into the trade, and to negotiate an agreement with employers on prices to be paid for different kinds of work. The early organizations concentrated on the latter, and by 1810 London compositors had won from their employers a Scale of Prices. This was revised - down - in 1816, but then remained the basis of all payment until 1866.

The watchdogs of the Scale were the various Chapels. These retained their social activities, but became increasingly the preservers of compositors' customs and privileges, and the Father of the Chapel assumed the role of spokesman for the journeymen in disputes with the employer. In time he became the Union delegate, and when employers refused to accept his interpretation of custom or Scale, he called on the Union for help.<sup>1</sup> Often, the Union's first step was to attempt to arrange arbitration by a group of employers. If the offending employer refused to accept this proposal, or would not abide by the decision of the arbitrators or failed to reach agreement by private discussion, the Union could and often did declare the office closed, and call on the compositors to come out. Those who did were paid a special strike allowance; those who did not had their names published through the trade as 'rats'.

The employer could attempt to break an effective strike in two ways. He could attempt to undermine the loyalties of the local men to their union or workmates; or he could import unemployed compositors from other districts. The unions' techniques for controlling their

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph, the ghost who inhabited every Chapel, often used to put pressure on non-unionists to join the union by mixing their type while they were out of the composing room, and submitting them to sundry other persecutions.

reluctant members were at this stage limited to the imposition of fine or the threat of expulsion. For unionists and non-unionists alike, there was fear of the penalties attached to 'ratting'. These were not inconsiderable. The stigma a man earned himself by 'going in' could remain for years, and result in his sacking from a steady berth in some future and better time because the Chapel decided it would not work with him.

There was another partial defence open to the union; to build up as far as possible a local monopoly of the 'best' workmen, so that an employer who took on non-union hands would have to rely on drunkards, dullards and incompetents. This tactical consideration was partly born of necessity. In an age when employers were strongly opposed to unions, only the best workmen could proclaim their unionism with impunity. Membership of this elite had a special appeal to those still mindful of the former social status of the compositor by offering them a new aristocratic connection in place of the one now vanished. The activities of compositors' societies show the influence of energetic groups dedicated to the ideals of temperance and self-improvement. Unions stopped meeting at pot houses, and began to build libraries. Their denunciations of non-unionists - men reviled as immoral, drunken and incompetent - could not have been exceeded by any employer who had experienced these qualities in his men. Woe to him, then, who was foolish enough to employ such men in place of unionists!

But despite these stratagems, the early unions believed that the best way of maintaining the Scale was to take over the functions that the Stationers' Company

had relinquished and limit the entry of apprentices into the trade. On this point employers' resistance was toughest, and before 1850 only the unions in the north of England attempted to enforce a permissible ratio of apprentices to journeymen. They failed, and the strikes they undertook in defence of their policy were ruinous.

The unions had other ways of attempting to equate the supply of labour to its demand. By the 1850s they were prepared to assist members who wished to try their fortunes in another land with an emigration grant but until that time, transfer of most unemployed compositors took place by tramping. It had long been the custom for compositors out of work to 'tramp' from town to town in search of employment. Clubs that formed mainly for relieving members of the craft frequently became unions after the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1825, and the unions took over their functions of tramp relief. They encouraged unemployed members to tramp by issuing them with a ticket entitling them to relief from other branches or other societies on their route.

The defects of the tramping system was one of the drives towards amalgamation of the various compositors' unions into one. Because certain tramping routes were more popular than others, the burden of tramping relief was not shared equally among the unions, and some objected to expending large sums in solving the problems of others. Further the exigencies of climate, separation from family, and the paucity of relief drove many a good union tramp to 'ratting'.

There were other strategic reasons for amalgamation. Closing of an office had little effect if compositors in another union did not recognize the ban. Similarly, it was unreal to expect employers in one district to honour an agreement on limitation of apprentices if their

competitors a few miles away were free to take on as many boys as they pleased. For all these reasons, a printing union would be most effective when it had jurisdiction over the whole national economy.

Attempts at the union of local typographical societies culminated by the mid-forties in the foundation of the National Typographical Association which proceeded to enforce the limitation of apprentices by a determined strike policy. Depression hastened the failure of the N.T.A. and it suffered secession of its member districts. But it did not shatter into crystals, and the unions that remained were substantial, if not national. The day of the small local union had passed, and the surviving unions were of the New Model.

#### The British Typographical Societies, 1860-1890.

The New Model printing unions were distinguished by their avoidance of strikes, and their policy of cautious consolidation. The militancy of the old unions was largely abandoned; strikes were regarded as a necessary evil, but something that might have to be resorted to in extreme cases. Union policy was largely directed towards a strengthening of power so that the threat when made could carry some quality of awe. The proportion of printing workers enrolled in the unions began to rise in the sixties, and rose more quickly in the seventies. The increased membership became subject to closer control by the executive of the union. This was achieved largely through a revision of benefit policy.

After 1860, all the typographical societies began to revise their attitude towards their unemployed members. Gradually they came to accept the argument that unemployment relief was not a simple charitable payment, but a

powerful device for deterring those who were tempted to 'rat' on the Society's minimum rate. In a sense, unemployed members could be considered as men on strike against a lower wage, it was therefore appropriate to pay them something equal to or approaching strike pay.

In 1871, the Typographical Association<sup>1</sup> instituted a benefit fund that paid unemployed members eight shillings a week for up to six weeks in each quarter of the year. The fund gradually superseded the old tramping system that the Association and its member societies had formerly operated. In 1877, the Scottish Typographical Association completely abolished its system of tramping relief, and three years later replaced it with a fund similar to that of the Typographical Association. The London Society of Compositors in 1866 had raised the benefit payable by its fund to ten shillings a week, payable in any 13 weeks of the year.

The increased amounts payable under these schemes could only be founded by amalgamating the 'trade' and 'benefit' funds - which meant that all members became compulsory contributors to unemployment relief. Some members objected violently. There had long been arguments as to whether unions should take on 'benefit functions', and those who argued that unions should confine themselves to 'trade' matters alone could point to some past compositors' societies that had been bankrupted by a payment of unemployment benefits.<sup>2</sup> But in all the 'New Model' unions the proponents of compulsory benefit contributions carried the day.

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<sup>1</sup>Strictly speaking, the 'Provincial Typographical Association' at this date. The word 'Provincial' was dropped from the title in 1877. For the sake of simplicity, the organisation will be referred to henceforth as the Typographical Association in this section.

<sup>2</sup>e.g., The London Union of Compositors in 1838.



The principle of compulsory contribution was also applied to other benefits that the 'New Model' unions began to pay. Between 1868 and 1877, the London Society of Compositors, the Typographical Association, and the Scottish Typographical Association all instituted Mortuary Benefit Funds. These funds paid the next of kin of a deceased member a sum of up to £10 proportionate to length of continuous membership. In addition to their Mortuary Funds, the London Society of Compositors and the Typographical Association each instituted a superannuation fund, and the Scottish Typographical Association began to pay sickness benefits in 1877.

By the standards of the times, these funds paid generously in terms of the small contribution they involved, and they help explain why union membership grew faster than the printing industry workforce between 1861 and 1891. The increase in the workforce itself was rapid. In 1891, there were almost three times as many compositors in London as there had been in 1861; in the same time, the membership of the London Society of Compositors increased almost four times. Similarly, the number of printers in provincial England increased almost three times in this period, and the membership of the Typographical Association increased more than five times.<sup>1</sup> With increased membership, the financial position of the Typographical Societies became stronger.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Censuses of 1861 and 1891, there were 6,220 and 15,620 compositors in London respectively. The membership of the London Society of Compositors increased from 2,550 to 9,350 over the thirty years. In the same period the number of printers in the provinces increased from 16,653 to 48,477, and the membership of the Typographical Association from 1,922 to 10,836.

In 1861, the London Society of Compositors had cash assets amounting to a little over a pound for each member; by 1890 its assets had increased to over three pounds per head.<sup>1</sup>

Benefit funds not only brought the 'New Model' unions a larger membership; they increased the disciplinary power of the unions over their members. Benefit was payable only to those members whose contributions were not in arrears, and who had had a minimum continuous membership of a certain number of years. A member expelled for breach of rules forfeited all his rights to benefit, and even if re-admitted had to serve his qualifying period once more before he became entitled to any benefit payment. 'Ratting' became less frequent, and the bargaining position of the typographical societies became relatively stronger.

Although the individual typographical societies increased in strength - indeed, partly because they became stronger individually - they made very little progress towards national amalgamation. Nor did they make any worthwhile attempt to amalgamate with what came to be called the 'kindred' trade societies. These were the old-established societies of lithographers, bookbinders, and paper warehousemen; and the newer societies that were formed to cover men in occupations that the technological revolution in the printing industry had created, or whose numbers its expansion had generally increased. Thus in London machine minders, stereotypers and electrotypers, machine rulers, and paper cutters, all formed their own societies, and by 1889 the first union for unskilled men in the industry had appeared. In the provinces

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<sup>1</sup>In 1861, the London Society of Compositors had 2,550 members and its funds amounted to £3,007. In 1890, it had 8,910 members and funds amounting to £29,587. Benefit payments to members averaged about four shillings a head in 1861, and about 19 shillings in 1890.

- Source: E. Howe and H.E. Waite: The London Society of Compositors, London, 1948, Appendix II. The Histories of the Typographical Association and the Scottish Typographical Association include no table of total funds.

the Typographical Association admitted only those machine minders who could prove a term of apprenticeship, and members of the other printing trades were left to look after themselves.

Before 1890, what attempts there were towards amalgamation followed three different principles: amalgamation of printing crafts in a local federation, amalgamation of societies covering the one printing craft at national level, and amalgamation of all printing crafts at national level. Local combinations of printing craft societies that resulted were only temporary; the London conference of typographical societies in 1886 achieved no agreement or amalgamation; but conferences in Manchester in 1890 and 1891 resulted in the establishment of a permanent national body, the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation.

The Federation was achieved only after a considerable watering-down of the objectives of those who organized the Manchester conferences. Its rules as finally passed gave a guarantee that it would not interfere in the internal management of any of its constituent societies. The Federation would authorize no strike 'without the consent of each union involved in the dispute being first obtained, and afterwards endorsed by the council of the Federation.'<sup>1</sup> Member societies had no financial obligations to the Federation. The functions were therefore purely advisory and consultative.

The typographical societies had grave doubts about committing themselves to an association even so innocuous as this. Some members of the Typographical Association feared 'levelling down to the condition of some of the other trades',<sup>2</sup> but the Association joined none the less.

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<sup>1</sup> A.E. Musson: The Typographical Association, London, 1954, p.289.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,

The Scottish Typographical Association joined in 1891 but seceded almost immediately. The London Society of Compositors refused to join at all. Still the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation lived on, and in 1892, 18 societies - nearly all of them from the 'kindred' trades - were members.

The typographical societies lacked interest in forming a strong national association because they denied any fundamental opposition between the interests of their employers and their own. Like the old typographical unions, the 'New Model' unions continued to make use of the strike as a tactical weapon; but the strikes they conducted were small and local, and they preferred to avoid them whenever possible. They believed that the prosperity of the men was bound up with that of their masters: '... we have never overlooked the fact that the interests of the employers are identical with our own', said the Annual Report of the London Society of Compositors in 1884.<sup>1</sup> Most officers of the typographical societies subscribed to the Wages Fund theory, and considered that the fund would be greater in the printing industry if only there was not so much 'wasteful competition'. The masters themselves were largely to blame, and the fortunes of the men depended largely on their finding a solution to their own problems. 'One of the great causes of the severe and unprofitable competition now so prevalent in the printing trade is the want of a better understanding and greater unity of action among the employers', said Henry Slatter, the Secretary of the Typographical Association, in 1875.<sup>2</sup> The Societies were prepared to

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Quoted in Howe and Waite, The London Society of Compositors, p.194.

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A.E. Musson, The Typographical Association, p.157.

help the 'fair' and 'good' employers in their difficulties with their 'unfair' competition; success of the 'fair' employers would mean greater prosperity for their members. The Stationers' Company was dead, but the societies wanted its soul to go marching on.

The typographical societies' continued sense of identity between the interests of masters and men inclined them to offer arbitration as a method of settling differences that arose in negotiation. Some of the societies' secretaries were strenuous advocates of arbitration, and the London Society of Compositors, the Scottish Typographical Association, and the Typographical Association all submitted some disputes to the arbitration of a chairman satisfactory to both employers and employed. But members often objected strongly to the use of arbitration. They disliked 'outside interference' in their affairs; and they doubted the ability of 'outsiders' to understand their problems. Despite the incorporation of clauses which provided for the settlement of disputes by arbitration in the societies' rules, it remained 'a rare expedient, only occasionally used'.<sup>1</sup>

The typographical societies' conviction that their interests were identical with those of the employers also governed their relations with unions outside their trade. They believed in trade union co-operation but not in working class action. Three branch secretaries of the Typographical Association - Wood, Nicholson and Dronfield - were virtually responsible for setting up the organisation that summoned the Trades Union Congresses. Representatives of the Typographical Association attended every conference from 1872, and the London Society of Compositors from 1874. Henry Slatter, Secretary of the Typographical Association, was a member of the T.U.C.'s Parliamentary Committee from 1877-1890.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.173

Before 1885, the Trades Union Congresses themselves adopted no working class outlook. A large majority of their members - and indeed a large majority of members in the unions they represented - shared the laissez-faire philosophy of their employers. The Congress was primarily interested in establishing the rights of unions to bargain with employers from a position of approximate legal equality. The Trade Union Acts of 1871 and 1875 suited the Congresses' outlook. They were prepared to lobby parliamentarians for the establishment of legal rights for working men in particular issues, and they considered that the State had a duty to prohibit the worst abuses of employment in factories. But legislative interference beyond this point was 'political' - and successive T.U.C.'s were rigidly opposed to the intrusion of 'politics' into trade union affairs.

By the mid-eighties, the opposition to the principles that had governed the action and thought of the Trades Union Congresses and their Parliamentary Committee had grown very strong. John Burns and Tom Mann led an attack on unions 'that have ceased to be unions for maintaining the rights of labour, and have degenerated into more middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions.'<sup>1</sup> Socialism was the remedy for working-class ills; and socialism demanded legislative action on the working class's behalf. The Trade Union Congress at Swansea in 1887 instructed the Parliamentary Committee to take a vote among all unions to discover their thoughts on the limitation of the legal working day to eight hours by act of parliament.

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John Burns, quoted by S. and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism, p.385/

The Typographical Association did not issue the ballot papers the Parliamentary Committee supplied, but invited its branch societies to discuss the matter. The resulting branch resolutions were almost unanimously opposed to the legal regulation of the working day as inopportune, impractical, or wrong in principle. The Association's Executive Council 'strongly (condemned) the action of the Trades Union Congress at Swansea in introducing party politics into its proceedings'.<sup>1</sup> Next year, the Association took the ballot, which showed a small majority in favour. Henry Slatter and the Executive Council however remained absolutely opposed, despite the fact that the second ballot among members of the London Society of Compositors had given much the same result as the Typographical Association's ballot.

This aversion to 'politics' meant that none of the typographical societies showed much interest in existing parliamentary parties, let alone in the formation of a working class party whose very existence would have denied the harmony of interest between master and man. In 1884, the Birmingham Branch of the Typographical Association got as far as resolving that 'it was no use sending a rich man to parliament' and that they should 'run a labour candidate'.<sup>2</sup> They did not, however. About the same time, the London Society got a little closer to parliamentary politics by interviewing candidates for the 1886 general elections on their attitude towards having public printing done by firms that did not pay the Society's minimum rate. The Society did not contemplate standing any candidate of its own.

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<sup>1</sup> A.E. Musson, The Typographical Association, pp.345-6

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.349

It had taken three quarters of a century for typographical unions to go even the slightest distance towards recognizing any necessary conflict between their interests and those of their employers. They preferred to settle their differences with employers without the intervention of the State, and they did not yet see Government as a power to be wielded by a class-based parliamentary party. Their self-reliance was based on an optimism and a sense of their own worth that precluded their organization of the effort of other skilled printing craftsmen,<sup>1</sup> let alone that of the increasing numbers of unskilled workers in their own industry. Their aim was the restoration of the compositors' privileged position in a capitalist society, not its replacement by one of another type.

But the unions' official views were by no means shared by all their members. Those of them who migrated to Australia in the half century after the gold rushes took old attitudes as well as new, and revived in the antipodes arguments half a century old in the Mother Country. Most considered that their unions in the new land had as their main purpose the re-establishment of those customary privileges which would assist the compositor to regain that position in society that he had occupied in the days when printers had had the privilege of wearing a sword. These men were in general agreement on the value of craftsmanship, moral living and self-improvement. They differed on questions of tactics: the propriety of striking, the utility of benefit schemes, the value of arbitration, the prospect of reaching a Stationers' Company arrangement with the Masters. Their view of their

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<sup>1</sup>In 1885 there were fourteen different craft associations of printers in London alone. See E. Howe and H. Waite, The London Society of Compositors, London, 1948, p.196



trade societies was essentially conservative, and they conceived them as acting in isolation from the other printing crafts and the unions of tradesmen in other industries. Intervention in parliamentary politics was as unthinkable as the admission into the unions of men without an indenture.

There were always some who disagreed, and the eventual effect of events in Australia between the gold rushes of the fifties and the depression of the nineties was to strengthen their hands. But by that time, the period of greatest British influence on the Australian printing industry and its unions was drawing to a close.

## CHAPTER TWO

THE VICTORIA TYPOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION

The Australian gold rushes of the 1850s produced a revolution in the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. Their population tripled in ten years. Sydney, was a city of almost 100,000 by 1861; Melbourne, little more than a village a year or so before the discovery of payable gold, became a city of 140,000 people by the end of the fifties, and in most matters had established a dominance it retained for the rest of the century. Almost before the gold rush years were out, the citizens of both colonies enjoyed responsible government, manhood suffrage, secret voting, and the 'democratic' measures that followed these reforms.

In Sydney and Melbourne, the trade societies that had been founded earlier experienced disintegration, consolidation, triumph and disaster in quick succession. Typographical societies shared their general fortune. Printing presses followed the gold prospectors, and trade organization followed the presses. By 1858, over a dozen towns claimed typographical societies of their own, or a connection with the society of some other town. The largest and most important of these was the Victoria Typographical Association, nearly all of whose members worked in Melbourne.

In a few years, the V.T.A. ran the whole gamut of union tactics, won spectacular success, and suffered crippling defeat. It began by organizing strikes, and under pressure of circumstance abandoned them in an attempt to evolve schemes of conciliation and arbitration

that were acceptable to the master printers. Despite its members' early militancy, their instinct was conservative, and they retired from the great issues that concerned other organized skilled workmen: the eight-hour day and the representation of the labouring classes in parliament. As times got harder, so the V.T.A. abandoned trade functions, and became a benefit society. By the mid-sixties, it no longer existed; and neither did any other, save one, of the typographical societies born in gold rush years.<sup>1</sup>

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### Boom, Depression and the Trade Union Movement

The Australian gold rushes began with the discovery of payable gold near Bathurst, N.S.W., in 1851. In 1852, prospectors struck far richer and more extensive fields in Victoria, and these quickly became the main attraction for migrant diggers. In Victoria the effects of the gold rushes were both more dramatic and more enduring.

The value of Victorian gold production and the level of economic activity in the State show close correspondence. In 1852, the diggings yielded gold worth over £12,000,000, and the effect of this was to dislocate practically all activity other than fossicking, for both that year and the next. As workmen left jobs to find fortunes, wages rose to money levels that they did not reach again until a century later. The Government struggled to build roads, erect public buildings, and maintain minimum services; and

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<sup>1</sup>The exception is the Ballarat Typographical Society, which has managed to maintain its existence in one form or another ever since its foundation in 1857.

it suffered a serious weakening of its authority. Merchants bought speculative cargoes, and re-sold them at magnificent profit.

In 1854, the tempo began to slacken noticeably. Gold produced was worth only half the yield of 1852, and there were now twice as many seeking it. Wages and prices began to fall; the number of disappointed diggers returning to Melbourne created an unemployment problem for a Government which under stress of circumstances acknowledged some responsibility for the welfare of its subjects. Diggers at Ballarat organized the only armed challenge to governmental authority Australia has known in a dispute that followed a long succession of protests and meetings over the collection of licence fees.

There was no real economic recovery until 1856, when the value of the goldfields' production rose almost to the 1852 level. But the value of gold produced slumped badly in the next year, and there set in a decline of general economic activity which continued until the colonies managed to shape for themselves an economy not heavily dependent on the vanishing gold.

The effect of these changes on Victoria's infant labour movement was remarkable. Those trade societies that had existed in Melbourne before the gold discoveries vanished almost entirely. They began to re-form about 1854, when artisans first began to return from the goldfields in significant numbers.

Their experience as diggers had not been conducive to meek acceptance of the old conditions of labour. For a few years they had been their own masters, living a migratory life that brought them into contact with ex-convicts, political agitators, and organized movements of resistance to the Crown's authority. They had come

to the ends of the earth to better themselves, and better themselves they would, though Fortune had cheated them. In October 1854, the Government offered the unemployed work at stone breaking. The unemployed, members of no union, refused to work because the wages were too low. The Chairman of their meeting put it this way:

Besides would skilled artisans like to take 10s. a day after travelling 16,000 miles for it? (Cries of 'No! No!' and 'Down with the Argus'.)<sup>1</sup>

These collective refusals to take relief work at low pay continued in 1855.<sup>2</sup> It was a splendid basis for the organization of unions, and in the recovery of 1856, the building workers took advantage of it.

It was the building workers who had benefited most from the recovery. The Government faced the problem of providing roads, bridges, public buildings and railways for the hundreds of thousands of migrants who had arrived within a few years. Masons, bricklayers, carpenters and plasterers were relatively scarce. By 1856, 'they believed that they could have enforced either a rise in wages or shorter hours at their option, and they preferred the latter'<sup>3</sup> because 'The bad times of 1854-5 had impressed the skilled mechanics...with the idea that regular employment was better than very high wages.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Argus, 10 October 1854. Four days later, the Argus reported 'intimidation' of those who had accepted the ten shilling rate.

<sup>2</sup>T.A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, London, 1918, vol.II, p.725. At p.723 Coghlan quotes the wages of 'masons, bricklayers, and practically all building mechanics' at 15s. to 20s. a day in December 1854.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vol.II, p.727.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vol.II, p.726.

They fortified their claim with the general argument that leisure was necessary to the mental and moral welfare of the person, and the political good of the State. These views commanded wide acceptance in Melbourne, and this partly explains the builders' success.<sup>1</sup>

The builders did not enjoy their eight-hour day for long before they had to fight to keep it. The period of slackening activity after 1857 resulted in noticeable unemployment, even in the building industry, but the refusal to work for low rates was so general that despite the large numbers unemployed, wages in the building trades fell only very slowly. The Operative Stone Masons' Union grew until it had a membership of 3,000, by far the greatest of any Australian union to that time. It began a long series of strikes against the railway contractors, Cornish and Bruce, to preserve the eight-hour day, eliminate sub-contract work, and enforce a common rate of payment. Largely under the Stonemasons' leadership, unions in other skilled trades had already developed a high degree of co-operation in extending and then defending the eight-hour day. By the time of the Cornish and Bruce strikes, the unions were developing broader policies through the Trades Hall Committee, the Operatives Board of Trade, and the Operatives Reform Association, on whose behalf Charles Jardine Don stood as a workingman's candidate in the ministerial election for Melbourne.<sup>2</sup>

Don's candidature expressed the unions' disillusionment with the representation of working men by men of other classes. He and his supporters asserted continually

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<sup>1</sup>Helen Hughes, 'The Eight-Hour Day and the Development of the Labour Movement in Victoria in the Eighteen Fifties', Historical Studies, vol.9, no.36, May 1961.

<sup>2</sup>G. Serle, The Golden Age, Melbourne, 1963, p.271.

that working men as such had specific interests that only working men could represent. When he stood again in 1859 (this time successfully) Don put forward a platform that included specifically working class demands: legalization of the eight-hour day, abolition of the Master and Servants Act, and the legal regulation of a lien on wages. By November 1859 he was declaring that 'Capital and Labour... are naturally antagonistic',<sup>1</sup> and this statement must have had a truthful ring at least to some thousands of building workers who had been involved in the strikes against Cornish and Bruce over the years. It had very little appeal, however, to the compositors of the Victoria Typographical Association, who had kept themselves aloof from the issues that agitated their brother unionists in the building trades. The reasons for their isolation resulted from a curious interaction of British tradition with Australian circumstance.

#### The Printers and Their Industry

The Melbourne printing industry in the fifties was almost entirely a newspaper industry. In the year before the Victorian gold discoveries, there were four dailies, but only two of these, the Herald and the Argus, survived the gold rush period. Of the two, the Argus was considerably the more powerful and prosperous. Even in 1850, its circulation had exceeded that of its rivals combined. By August 1853, it was printing 23,000 of each issue, and in January 1854, it boasted editorially of a 'circulation of all the London Dailies put together except The Times'.<sup>2</sup> This huge expansion forced its printing department through a mechanical revolution. As late as October 1850 it was still printed by hand on Columbian

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<sup>1</sup>Argus, 22 November 1859.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 23 January 1854.

presses; on 27 January 1853 it printed its first issue on a steam driven machine, and eighteen months later installed a 'fast printing machine' specially designed by the renowned Mr Applegath of London.<sup>1</sup> But neither the Argus nor its competitors could do anything to speed production in the composing room except to take on more compositors, pay them more money, and work them longer hours.

Composing rooms in the fifties were not designed for the purpose, and seem to have been commonly made by knocking out the dividing walls between two or three warehouses or tenements.<sup>2</sup> The frames that held the cases were arranged in long rows, with 'gullies' between. The only light came from candle stubs stuck at the tops of the cases, or from gas brackets in the walls. There was usually no provision for ventilation,<sup>3</sup> and lead dust hung heavy in the air.

In this foul atmosphere, up to 80 men worked for up to 16 hours a day. They began about mid-afternoon, when they came to distribute the type used the night before back into their cases. After nights of particularly heavy setting, they walked home in the dawn, or even in the sunrise.<sup>4</sup> For months at a time, they practically lived in the room. Their cases held a hundred things besides type: food scraps, tobacco plugs, needles and thread, bottles.

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<sup>1</sup> In Sydney, the Sydney Morning Herald also converted to steam power in 1853.

<sup>2</sup> This was fairly common practice in factory construction for most of the nineteenth century. On factory conditions in the last half of the nineteenth century, see E.C. Fry, 'The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia in the 1880s', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1956, part II, chapter I. The Argus began rebuilding its composing room in 1859.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Typographical Circular, no.XV, March 1859, p.119.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., no.XVI, April 1859, p.121; no.XIX, July 1859, p.149; and no.XXVIII, April 1860, p.221.



Many of the men who worked as newspaper compositors seem to have been men who had spent some time in book setting in the Old Country, but here there was no book industry in which they could exercise their aesthetic gift or their superior education.<sup>1</sup> One of their compensations was to write letter to the Australian Typographical Circular in which Latin verse, Shakespearian quotation, Dickensian reference, and classical allusion all came tumbling out in a prose often grotesque but often curiously effective. Another compensation was the money they earned.

Piece rates paid to Melbourne compositors ranged from 9d a thousand ens<sup>2</sup> in mid-1851 to 2s6d a thousand ens in the last quarter of 1852, and held that figure for part of 1853. At these rates, according to the Argus, 'For a man, by ordinary work to earn £10 or £12 a week on a daily paper was not extraordinary, and ... the better and more fortunate workmen sometimes made as much as £17 to £18 in six days.'<sup>3</sup> The immense amount of penalty matter in the Argus makes its assertion credible,<sup>4</sup> and it is certain

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<sup>1</sup>Jobbing shops in Melbourne did publish a few books in the late fifties, but book publishing remained very much of a sideline.

<sup>2</sup>The letter 'm' occupied the full square of the body of the type, and the letter 'n' half of this area. The 'em' and the 'en' were therefore anciently adopted as units of printer's measure. For purposes of calculating wages paid by the piece, the 'en' was adopted rather than the 'em' because it represented fairly well the average width of all the letters set. Loosely, the term 'em' is sometimes used to stand for the pica (or in modern terms, 12 point) em. Properly speaking, the em size varies with the size of the type.

<sup>3</sup>Argus, 1 January 1864.

<sup>4</sup>Traditionally, classified advertisement carried a general penalty of one third, and the compositor was paid for the rules between the advertisements.

that in these years at least, the swiftest compositors in the best jobs earned more - even considerably more - than other skilled craftsmen. After 1853, piece rates fell somewhat, but as late as January 1857 the Argus's assertion that their men earned more than any other equally skilled tradesmen was true at least of some of them.<sup>1</sup>

For the Melbourne newspaper compositor, the Golden Age of Printing known in Britain to their grandfathers was now returning. Not only were they rewarded beyond their expectation, but the chances of exchanging the status of a journeyman for that of a master was excellent. Wherever a gold rush set in, the printer soon arrived, with a fount of type in his luggage and his Columbian, Cope or Albion in a bullock dray that followed a week behind him. The Beechworth Constitution, the Castlemaine Mail, the Maryborough Advertiser and scores of others shared their destiny with the goldfield that fathered them. No contemporary sources attempt a list, but it seems that at least 30 Melbourne compositors became proprietors in the fifties.<sup>2</sup> Some of them were audacious enough to float the Age as a daily in Melbourne itself.<sup>3</sup>

The Golden Age for printers passed with the decline in gold production and the slowing of economic activity after 1857. Digger-compositors and proprietors of

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<sup>1</sup>Argus, 8 January 1857.

<sup>2</sup>T.L. Work, in his 'Early Printers of Melbourne', a series published in the Australasian Typographical Journal in 1897-8 mentions ten compositors from the Melbourne Herald office alone who became proprietors in the fifties. My estimate is based on stray references in the Australian Typographical Circular and elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup>Twenty-eight compositors were members of the Age co-operative when it was first formed. The co-operative arrangement lasted for 18 months until it was compelled to sell out.

of failing gold rush newspapers returned to Melbourne.<sup>1</sup> The result was an apparent expansion of the Melbourne jobbing trade as compositors, who found steady work hard to get, sought to take advantage of the surplus small printing presses by setting themselves up as masters. There were only six jobbing offices in Melbourne in October, 1852;<sup>2</sup> in 1858 the Melbourne Directory listed 25 printing firms, and two years later, 41. By this time the masters of Melbourne could be 'pitted against one another like bulldogs'<sup>3</sup> in their attempt to survive in a time of economic decline. They employed boys to the exclusion of all but a handful of journeymen.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Victoria Typographical Association

The vicissitudes of the economy and the printing industry regulated the rise and fall in power of the compositors' union. In its career it passed through three clearly definable phases.

The first of these was short lived. In 1851, the compositors of Melbourne had founded the Victoria Typographical Association.<sup>5</sup> The V.T.A. virtually disintegrated with the first gold rushes; in a time when 'Compositors would only work for a month or so to

<sup>1</sup>The newspapers most quickly affected were those where the gold gave out suddenly. In other towns, there was a slower process of contraction, e.g., at Beechworth, where the daily became a twice-weekly. By mid-1859 failures included some substantial papers, like the Geelong Daily News and Ballarat Mercury, whose fortunes depended less immediately on the production of gold.

<sup>2</sup>Australasian Typographical Journal, vol.VIII, no.87, January 1878, p.115 (hereinafter: A.T.J.).

<sup>3</sup>Australian Typographical Circular, no.XXIII, November 1859, p.183.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., no.XXVI, February 1860, p.202

<sup>5</sup>On typographical unions before the gold rushes, see my articles in the Printing Trades Journal, Vol.L, nos.1 and 2, January and February 1966.

obtain a little capital, with which they went "on the wallaby"<sup>1</sup>, there was little use for a typographical association. But in February 1854, the Association held what it described as its Third Annual General Meeting, and thereafter the Argus regularly noted its activities. That the V.T.A. revived earlier than other trade societies suggests that the Chapels of the dailies had already achieved some organization.<sup>2</sup>

The new Secretary and President were most likely recent arrivals.<sup>3</sup> Under their guidance, the Association achieved considerable success. By the end of 1854, all but three of the Argus compositors belonged to it,<sup>4</sup> and it had had similar success at the Government Printing Office. It is also probable that it 'closed' some offices to its members, and built up a strike fund.

This apparatus was good enough to enforce increases in the piece rate when prices were falling and wages paid to other skilled craftsmen had been substantially cut. In the recession of 1854, the wages of masons and almost all other building workers fell by about a third between January and December; but piece rates at the Herald and the Argus rose from 2s to 2s6d a thousand.

On the 4 December, some of Melbourne's master printers met and 'determined to meet combination on one side by co-operative action on the other; and a Master Printers' Association was formed...for purposes of mutual protection'.<sup>5</sup> A few weeks later, the Master Printers'

<sup>1</sup> T.L. Work, 'Early Printers of Melbourne', in A.T.J., vol.XXVIII, no.333, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> A strike at the Herald in that month was probably the occasion of its re-organization.

<sup>3</sup> Messrs Kent and McCausland. They were not members of the V.T.A. before the gold rushes.

<sup>4</sup> Argus, 26 December 1854.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. The Argus would never have admitted to 'combination'!

Association announced that a reduction would take effect after 4 January 1855.<sup>1</sup> When the day came, 45 of the Argus's 48 men left their frames, and so did an unknown number at the Herald. So solid was the strike in Melbourne, that the Editor of the Argus had to go to Hobart to get replacements.<sup>2</sup> But he did get them, and with their arrival at the end of January, the strike was as good as over. A fortnight later, the piece rate was down to 2s a thousand,<sup>3</sup> and a month after that to 1s6d<sup>4</sup>. The V.T.A. fell apart. Most of its Board of Management left town, and members paid no subscriptions.

The second phase of the V.T.A.'s existence began on 30th July 1856, when some compositors determined to revive the Association for the purpose of securing the eight-hour day for the printing trade. But the very meeting called for this purpose rejected the proposition for a shorter working day,<sup>5</sup> and almost immediately the revived V.T.A. began to organize a strike for higher wages.

This was an important decision. Even on the reduced rates that had operated from 1855, some newspaper compositors could still earn more than the best paid of

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<sup>1</sup> At a meeting called on 19 December to consider the financial difficulties of the Age, a circular issued mentioned 'a hoped-for fall in the rates for compositors'. Age, 20 December 1854.

<sup>2</sup> Age, 25 January 1855.

<sup>3</sup> Argus, 12 February 1855.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 19 March 1855.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Typographical Circular, no.XX, August 1859, p.157.

building tradesmen.<sup>1</sup> But they could do so only by working many more hours each week, since masons and some other builders now worked an eight-hour day. Measured in hourly terms, they had lost their recently re-established position as the best paid craftsmen. It was no longer sufficient that they were far better off than in the Old Country.<sup>2</sup> Their decision to strike for an increase foreshadowed a preoccupation with the pre-eminence they had found in the return of their Golden Age. It also reflected a preference for advancing their poor working conditions as an argument not for shorter hours but for higher wages. This decision to strike for increased wages and not for shorter hours cut them off from the nascent eight-hour and Trades Hall organizations.

Early in 1857 the compositors at the Argus sought an increase in the piece rate. The management refused, the men went out, and despite the imprisonment of one of them,<sup>3</sup> stayed out. The paper was set by staff members, and continued to appear, but on 12 January its editorial announced

It is a sufficiently disagreeable thing to yield to an unreasonable demand, enforced in an illegal manner; but such is our fate in reference to the strike [sic] among our compositors... we have found our men influenced by so impracticable a spirit, and their claims so far sympathised in by others of their calling, that, single-handed, it was impossible to carry on the contest.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Argus, 8 January 1857. The Argus claimed that its good workmen earned from £7 to £8 a week, and compositors 'of ordinary diligence' averaged £4.19.6d. Ruling rates for masons were £5.16s for a 48 hour week.

<sup>2</sup>Australian Typographical Circular, no. XVIII, June 1859, p.143, letter by R.H.M.: 'here, where printers are, pecuniarily speaking, in a much better position than their brethren at home...'

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Bethel was sentenced to serve one month's imprisonment for breach of the Master and Servant's Act.

<sup>4</sup>Argus, 12 January 1857.

The Argus yielded, but almost immediately began to plan for the destruction of the V.T.A. as a trades union. Before half a year was out Mr Mackinnon, manager of the Argus, was offering English compositors a free passage to work for him. He found enough unemployed printers willing to fill up his complement, despatched them from Liverpool by the Nile, in September, and had them in Melbourne on December 18. A condition of the engagement of each man was that he should undertake not to join a trade union.<sup>1</sup>

Very little could be done. On learning of Mr. Mackinnon's activities, the compositors of the Argus offered to bind themselves in a 6 months' engagement and the V.T.A. supported them. In November, in anticipation of the approaching surplus of compositors, the proprietors of the Herald enforced a reduction of 3d per thousand on their compositors, who were not members of the V.T.A., which advised 'resistance'; but there was none.<sup>2</sup> In December, the Argus discharged some thirty of its compositors, and replaced them with their importations, at reduced rates.<sup>3</sup>

The V.T.A. did not resist; but when the Age announced a reduction of the rate to 1s3d, it tried what it must have recognised as a desperate gamble, called out the companionship, declared the Age office closed, and paid strike money to those who stayed out. Once again, the proprietors attacked the 'tyranny' of the

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Typographical Circular, no.VI, June 1858, p.45.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., no.I, January 1858, pp.3-4.

<sup>3</sup> This is a conclusion which follows from the fact of importation of non-union compositors, and the fact of simultaneous reductions in the piece rates at the other two dailies.

Association and its right to exist, but this time there was no prosecution. There was no need for one. With over thirty compositors out of their frames at the Argus, the result was a foregone conclusion. Two pounds strike money each could not hold the men together, and even the President of the V.T.A., James Fisher, 'went in' on the strike.<sup>1</sup>

The collapse of the Age strike marks the end of the second phase of the V.T.A.'s existence. This time the Association itself did not go under, but there is a clear break in its policy. It abjured strikes, and began to place increasing emphasis on conciliation, arbitration, self-help and teetotalism. By the end of 1858, some of its most active members were expounding on the identity of interest between employer and employee, and looking optimistically to the masters' reasonableness. At a General Meeting held in the Temperance Hall in November 1858, Mr Kirkwood told his audience that

Employers were not to be bullied into submission but if calmly reasoned with it was the easiest thing in the world to enlist their sympathies. They were men like ourselves - many of them but a step above us - whose yearnings and prejudices must be in favour of humanity, and had only to be acted upon by well-ordered and systematic effort to ensure their perfect approval of every step taken by the operative to better his position. Mr Kirkwood was frequently cheered during his telling address.<sup>2</sup>

The V.T.A. adopted a theory of co-operation between employer and employee as the building unions moved towards one of antagonism. The masons and others

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<sup>1</sup>Australian Typographical Circular, no.I, January 1858, p.6

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., no.XI, December 1858, p.92.



wielded the strike weapon vigorously; the V.T.A. adopted a policy of conciliation and arbitration. From a purely technical view such a policy was expedient while the Association recovered from the disastrous effects of the Age strike. But it was modelled with British 'New Model' unions in mind, and reflected some long standing interests of compositors as a highly paid group that stood somewhat apart from other skilled tradesmen.

Even before the Age strike was properly over, some members gave notice of motion for the setting up of a joint Board of Arbitration with the employers.<sup>1</sup> The next meeting adopted the scheme. But before the Association could expect the masters to show any interest in the proposal, it had to be able to offer them something in return. It could best establish the usefulness of such a scheme by showing that as an Association it could enforce the Board's decisions on reluctant master printers, and so protect the others from the menace of undercutting. But before it could do this effectively, it would have to bring into its membership 'the scattered elements of the trade in the Colonies',<sup>2</sup> so that masters outside an agreement would not be able to evade the Board's decisions by employing labour over which the V.T.A. had no control.

Organizing 'the scattered elements of the trade' was a daunting task in 1858. The Australian Typographical Circular's first few Trade Reports listed about a score of places where the V.T.A. had established contact with

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Typographical Circular, no.III, March 1858, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., no.XXIII, November 1859, p.177.

Chapels of small local typographical associations<sup>1</sup> from Moreton Bay to Hobart Town, and Sydney to Adelaide. In view of the distances between the towns, the weak position of trade unions in law, and the popular animus against them, the plan could have succeeded only under economic conditions extraordinarily favourable to compositors. Instead, the depression of 1857 deepened, and eastern Australia fell into 'commercial inanition'. The V.T.A. at its best never succeeded in getting its membership in Melbourne up to much above half of the trade,<sup>2</sup> and the other Associations and Chapels faded away.

The masters never did look with much enthusiasm on the proposal for an Arbitration Tribunal. Masters and men did not discuss the proposal until July 1859, and when the arbitration rules were finally reported they revealed that decisions were to be based upon the 'established usages' of the trade, not the Rules and Regulations of the V.T.A.<sup>3</sup> The Association also conceded that the Arbitration Committee should be independent of it.<sup>4</sup> But before the year was out, negotiations had been broken off.<sup>5</sup> The employers by this time felt quite safe in ignoring the Association, preferring to solve their

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<sup>1</sup> At one time or another in 1858-9, the V.T.A. had members or correspondents at Adelaide, Ballarat, Bathurst, Beechworth, Brisbane, Castlemaine, Christchurch, Geelong, Hobart Town, Kilmore, Kyneton, Launceston, Maitland, Maryborough, Portland, Sandhurst, Sydney, and Wollongong. This scatter was far more the result of accident than organization.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Typographical Circular, no.III, March 1858, reported 203 members at 30 January 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., no.XXIV, December 1859, p.186

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., no.XX, August 1859, p.155.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., no.XXVI, February 1860, p.202.

problems of competition in their own way. There never was any agreement to regulate the trade.

Not all the members of the V.T.A. regarded this failure to reach an agreement with the masters as something entirely regrettable. The men who revived the V.T.A. in 1856 had hoped for the eight-hour day, and the closer combination with the organized trade union movement that it would have brought. Instead, the members had elected for higher wages and combination with employers. When William Rice became Secretary early in 1859, he did his utmost to reverse this choice.

Rice had been active in Irish politics before migrating to Melbourne in 1857. Almost immediately on his arrival he became involved in radical and working class movements. Prominent in the politics of the Land Convention, he became Secretary of the Protection League in its inaugural period, and Secretary of the Victorian Eight Hours League as well.<sup>1</sup> He was active in the movement that nominated Charles Don as the working man's candidate in 1859, and he talked the language of class opposition:

...the existence of a class interest was the greatest curse which could afflict a nation, causing oppression, robbery and distress. The effect of this class interest was the creation of what was called the upper classes, with whom the next great class - the mercantile class - had considerable sympathy, but very little with the masses. By the conjunction of these two classes, laws were passed injurious to the mass of the people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Press cuttings: Historical Sketches no.9 in Melbourne Trades Hall Deposit, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

<sup>2</sup>Argus, 23 March 1859.

When Rice became Secretary of the V.T.A. early in 1859, he also became Conductor of the Australian Typographical Circular, and immediately its content underwent a radical change. Previously, news of other trade unions had been slight. There had been a paragraph or two about the Trades Hall and Literary Institute, and a single sympathetic but discreet paragraph on the masons and their strikes against Cornish and Bruce.<sup>1</sup> From March 1859, it is possible to follow the struggle almost blow by blow. Improving compositors bent on arbitration were no doubt not a little surprised to read in the March issue that 'the representation of the working classes by working men was absolutely necessary'.<sup>2</sup>

The V.T.A. had been represented on one or two Trades Hall and Literary Institute Committees since early in 1858, but this had been the extent of its relations with other trades. Despite his best efforts, Rice was unable to involve the Association further in the trade union movement. He did get the Board of Management to invite members to march in the Eight Hours Anniversary procession, but when the day came, none did.<sup>3</sup> His own appearances before other unions seem to have been made individually, or as representative of one of his other organizations.

Before he had been in office a year, Rice presented his conservative opposition with a chance to unseat him. On 18 November 1859, a meeting of masons discussed the latest episode in the Cornish and Bruce strikes, and 'in the course of the evening the press of Melbourne was

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<sup>1</sup>Australian Typographical Circular, no.X, October 1858, p.77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., no.XV, March 1859, p.115.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., no.XVII, May 1859, pp.132-3. Rice sought to put the best face possible on it by recalling that on the day many members were working on the electoral rolls.

severely criticized'. Mr. Rice, who in the Circular report was described only as a 'compositor', told the meeting that newspapers were in reality class instruments, and suggested that the working classes ought to secure a newspaper of their own, and in the meantime, should refuse to take the Argus.<sup>1</sup> In February, when Rice came up for re-election as Secretary,

Mr. Lambert (Argus) moved that he be not elected, assigning, as his reasons for opposing, that he had at a public meeting of the masons in the Trades Hall advised the workmen to enter into a combination to put the Argus down, and that as he was mixed up with political matters, he was not a suitable Secretary for the Typographical Association.<sup>2</sup>

Representatives from all three dailies asserted that if Rice was re-elected, many members would leave the Association, and the election for the office of Secretary was postponed until the Annual General Meeting in March. Here his explanation was accepted, and he was duly re-elected. There was no other candidate.<sup>3</sup>

Rice's re-election did not mean that those members of the Association whose grand design for an arbitration committee had been frustrated were now prepared to adopt the broader and more militant policy that he had advocated. Rather it was that they were losing interest in the Association's future. By the autumn of 1860, seasonal slackness had added its weight to the general depression, and unemployment increased. With it came a revolt of unemployed V.T.A. members against their Executive, most of whom were newspaper men and therefore still in regular employment. The issue was the provision of benefit by the Association.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., no.XXIV, December 1859, p.188.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., no.XXVI, February 1860, p.203.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., no.XXVII, March 1860, p.210.

The provision of unemployment benefit had broken more than one British printing union, and members were sharply divided on the issue. In the autumn of 1860, the Association was in no condition to face a crisis. Plans for the establishment of an arbitration tribunal with the masters had come to nothing; members would not accept the alternative of throwing in their lot with other trade unionists; and with increasing unemployment, their loyalty was waning. Boy labour had been introduced on to the Herald, two members had lost their jobs in resisting, and V.T.A. members were applying for their positions.<sup>1</sup> The strike against the reduction on the Times at Ballarat had failed, and members of the V.T.A. had ratted.<sup>2</sup> More potential 'rats' were present among the unemployed whose numbers increased as country newspapers failed in the deepening depression.

In May, the Board decided to suspend publication of the Circular, and the affairs of the V.T.A. can be traced only by stray newspaper entries and an occasional reference in the Minutes of the Ballarat Typographical Society. But it is certain that the Association did establish its Benefit Fund, and became the Melbourne Provident Typographical Society.<sup>3</sup> As such, it exchanged trade information with Ballarat, and played some part in resisting a cut in the rate at the Herald early in 1863;<sup>4</sup> but it is ominous that by 1864, the Argus was referring to it as being organized

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., no.XXIX, May 1860, p.226.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., no.XXVIII, April 1860, p.225.

<sup>3</sup> Argus, 5 January 1864.

<sup>4</sup> Ballarat Typographical Society Minutes, 4 February 1863.

'on a right basis'.<sup>1</sup> Next year, even the Melbourne Provident Typographical Society failed. With the exception of the Ballarat society, not one of the gold rush typographical societies had survived the decade. The Ballarat Society lived on quietly, keeping itself alive, the only link in time between the societies of the fifties and their first new stirrings in the seventies.

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#### The British Typographical Societies and the Victoria Typographical Association

The printing industry that developed in Victoria in the 1850s was almost entirely a newspaper industry which demanded the concentration of a large number of compositors in a few places. This, together with the institution of the Chapel, facilitated the organization of the V.T.A. The V.T.A. adopted a constitution closely modelled on those of its British contemporaries.

British custom and practice influenced not only the form of the V.T.A., but also the spirit that actuated the policy of its members. In the Colony, compositors had the chance to recover that status that their British forefathers had held in the time before the industrial revolution. Once more they could become the highest paid of all craftsmen; and with their savings they could establish themselves as masters in the Colony's expanding printing industry. These circumstances helped to strengthen both traditions of strike policy and harmonious co-operation.

In the decade before the gold rushes, the National Typographical Association had sought to advance the British compositor's bargaining strength by maintaining a policy of

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<sup>1</sup>Argus, 5 January 1864.

strike action over a period of years. In Victoria, conditions for the successful prosecution of strikes were for a while far better than the N.T.A. had ever known them. The demand for compositors greatly exceeded the supply. Moreover, a good many compositors had experienced the independence and disrespect for authority of the gold digger. Eureka and the deeds of the 'Red Ribbon' movement probably excited at least some of those others who did not venture beyond Melbourne.

But like the strike policy of the N.T.A., the strike policy of the V.T.A. ended in failure. Its failure meant victory for those who urged that the Association should base its policy on friendly co-operation with the masters. Circumstances had sharpened the arguments of those who believed in the reasonableness of employers. Many employers had only recently been journeymen themselves; many still journeymen could expect one day to be employers. Thus, three years after the London Society of Compositors provided for a Court of Arbitration in its rules, the V.T.A. provided for one in its own. There would be no need for strikes, nor the involvement with other unions or with 'politics' that persistent strike action might bring.

At the end of the fifties, the tradition of harmonious co-operation with employers was dominant, but its popularity rested strongly on the defeat of recent strike action. The tradition of strike action remained strong enough for the V.T.A. to retain as its Secretary, William Rice, a man who believed that 'representation of the working classes by working men' was 'absolutely necessary'. The history of the sixties and seventies was to strengthen somewhat the position of those who doubted that the interests of employers and their employees was identical.

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## CHAPTER THREE

THE VICTORIAN TYPOGRAPHICAL UNION AND THE  
MELBOURNE TYPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

In eastern Australia, the sixties were a bridge between a gold-based economy and an economy based on the pastoral industry, public works, private construction, and foreign loans. Though both economies were prosperous, the years between were often 'years of somewhat painful readjustment to reduced circumstances'<sup>1</sup> for many wage-earners, with unemployment reaching a peak about 1866. Except for a brief period about 1875, unemployment in the seventies was noticeably less, and the increase in gross domestic product more rapid. The value of Australian gross domestic production rose from £53.4 million in 1861 to £78.5 million in 1871. Then in the seventies it almost doubled its rate of increase.<sup>2</sup>

The Printing Industry

Economic growth in the colony of Victoria followed this general pattern, and in these years the Victorian printing industry began its first significant diversification. This was based not so much on technical innovation as on simple extensions of well established typographical methods, and their application to new purposes. There was however one technical novelty. Ever since Caxton's time, woodcuts had provided a simple means of letterpress illustration. By 1800, wood-engraving had superseded the

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<sup>1</sup>Fry, 'The Condition of the Urban Wage-Earning Class', part I, chapter I, p.23.

<sup>2</sup>Measured in constant prices. See N.G. Butlin, Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing, 1861-1938/39, Cambridge, 1962, p.460.

woodcut in illustrations requiring the use of fine line.<sup>1</sup> By the 1860s Melbourne engravers had begun to apply photographic techniques to the engraving of the wooden block. By developing the photographic negative of their subject directly on to the wooden block, they facilitated quick and accurate reproduction.<sup>2</sup>

This technique was important to the development of the periodical and the illustrated paper that took place in the sixties and seventies. The simplest in presentation of these were the 'weeklies' published by the metropolitan dailies and designed to sell to country people who picked up their mail once a week from town. The Australasian, the Weekly Times and the Leader<sup>3</sup> were at first little more than summaries of the week's news, but other periodicals offered content more literary and more colourful. The Australian Journal began its long career in 1865; Melbourne Punch cartooned its comment of local

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<sup>1</sup>Wood-engravings were done on blocks cut across the grain of the plank. They printed as white on black; woodcuts printed as black on white.

<sup>2</sup>The only contemporary account of printing published in Australia (J. Degotardi, The Art of Printing, Sydney 1861) makes no mention of line-engraving on metal, but gives an account of 'photo-xylography', i.e. the development of a photographic negative on to wood. This process was well known in England, where it had considerably simplified and cheapened wood-engraving, but Degotardi does not say specifically that the process was used in Australia. However, by examining a selection of contemporary illustrations for the kinds of printing faults that result from the use of developing emulsion, J.A. Russell has established that photographic technique was being combined with engraving in Melbourne by 1859 at the latest.

<sup>3</sup>The Argus published the Australasian, the Daily Telegraph, the Weekly Times, the Age and the Leader.

events; the Melbourne Post presented full-page engravings of contemporary sensations, and added an occasional full-page multi-coloured lithograph.<sup>1</sup>

There was also a development of printing for advertising. Posters and hoardings began to appear in the sixties, and within a few years became 'quite an institution'.<sup>2</sup> Although imported products usually brought their own printed packaging with them, a small industry developed to supply bags, labels and brochures for local manufacturers and storekeepers.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the seventies, compositors setting advertisements were making far more use of wood-engraving, and seeking eagerly after new founts of display type.

But it was hard for the local industry to diversify beyond this. There was a very strong demand for fiction from Home, but rather than have their books manufactured in the colonies, British publishers preferred to have them printed as part of a long-run edition in England or Scotland, and add the words 'Australian Edition' to those they exported. Alternatively, they exported the stereotype matrices, and had the plates cast and run off in the colonies. Even the schoolbooks for the new 'national schools' set up by Act of the Parliament of

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<sup>1</sup>The trade advertisements of the seventies offer steam lithographic presses for sale, but whether these were used for this purpose is not known.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.VI, no.67, p.20.

<sup>3</sup>By 1873, printers' suppliers were advertising 'blocks suitable for bag printing'. See A.T.J., vol.III, no.35, p.72.

of Victoria in 1872 were printed in Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

Diversification had taken place, but its limitations were such that newspaper printing remained the staple of the industry. In the sixties, it expanded only slowly. In Melbourne, there were three dailies in 1860, and no more until 1869, when the Telegraph was first published.<sup>2</sup> In the whole colony, though population rose by almost 40 per cent between 1861 and 1871,<sup>3</sup> the number of dailies increased only from 13 to 14. There was a more impressive increase in the number of newspapers published less frequently.<sup>4</sup>

In the seventies, the increase in population was not proportionately so great as in the sixties,<sup>5</sup> but the expansion of the newspaper industry accelerated considerably. The 14 dailies of 1871 increased to 18 by 1881; the number of less frequently published newspapers from 82 to 100 in the same period.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Report of the Royal Commission on Tariff', Parliamentary Papers of Victoria 1883, Second Session, vol.4, no.50, pp.lviii and cxlii and evidence of R.L. Middleton.

<sup>2</sup> The Telegraph employed fewer compositors than the Argus, Herald or Age - about thirty, by March 1877. A.T.J., vol.VII, no.77, p.35.

<sup>3</sup> The population of Victoria, according to the Censuses, was 540,322 in 1861, and 731,528 in 1871.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Union List of Newspapers Published in Australia there were 49 non-daily newspapers in Victoria in 1861; in 1871 there were 82. This count, of course, only includes those newspapers that have since found their way into public libraries.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Census of 1881, the population of Victoria was 862,346.

<sup>6</sup> The Union List of Newspapers Published in Australia.

This expansion of non-daily newspaper printing had most important consequences for journeymen compositors and their union. The composition of both these papers and that of less frequently published periodicals shared two important characteristics. It was mainly solid matter that required little in the manner of aesthetic, complicated or even careful setting; and there was plenty of time to get the formes ready for press. Thus after he had been at case only a year or so, a boy was as useful as a man in this kind of shop.<sup>1</sup> There is no way of knowing how many boys their proprietors took on in the sixties; but in the seventies, the ratio of compositors under 20 to those over 20 increased from 1 : 2.8 to 1 : 2.4, despite an agreement on the limitation of apprentices that operated for most of the period.

Many - probably most - of the lads who worked on the papers that published once, twice or three times a week were never apprenticed.<sup>2</sup> Even if they had been, the master could not have met the terms of indenture that required thorough instruction in the 'art and mystery of printing', because the range of work done in these offices was usually very narrow. Large numbers of this first generation of colonially-trained compositors were mere 'hands at case', 'type-snatchers' or 'type-shovellers' incapable of anything except the simple solid setting of the weekly newspaper or periodical.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Royal Commission on Tariff', Minutes of Evidence, question 41473.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission on Employees in Shops, 'Report on the Operation of the Victorian Factory Act', Parliamentary Papers of Victoria 1884, vol.II, no.18, question 3861.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., question 3880ff.

The recommendation of these lads was their cheapness. The Australasian Typographical Journal alleged that on many weekly papers it was

a common practice for boys of tender years to take up copy at 8 a.m., and with the exception of going out for an hour to their dinners, continue the wearing process until 3 and even 5 a.m. the next morning.<sup>1</sup>

Witnesses told the Royal Commission on Employees in Shops that boys working on bi- or tri-weekly papers sometimes worked longer hours than compositors on metropolitan dailies.<sup>2</sup> Boys who thought they were being underpaid often left one master to seek another as a 'turnover'; but no matter how many times he had 'turned over' his indentures (if he had any), he was unlikely ever to be paid more than two-thirds of the journeyman's rate recognized by typographical societies. When he reached the age of 21, he had the choice of leaving, or being kept on as an 'improver' at the same sub-standard rates. Unless he could find enough skill to cope with other kinds of composing work, he would never be able to claim a man's wages.

The Society journeyman of Melbourne who claimed a journeyman's pay therefore found closed to him those offices where the greatest expansion of the industry was taking place. Those who were not lucky enough to 'hold a frame' on a Melbourne daily newspaper in 1860 had only a small chance of steady employment for the rest of the decade. Existing dailies expanded only slightly, so that the chances of finding a place on them depended largely on deaths or retirements. There was no new daily until 1869, and virtually no book industry.

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<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., vol.II, no.20, p.57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.58; and 'Report on ... the Victorian Factory Act', question 3838ff., and question 3860.

Migration to the country offered little prospect, because here again the newspapers that began in the sixties were not dailies, and some were entirely produced by boys.<sup>1</sup> Some scores of journeymen in Melbourne would seem to have been committed to long periods of under-employment, in which they eked out a living by 'grassing'<sup>2</sup> on a daily, and picking up what casual setting they could around the jobbing offices. For half a year before it finally expired in April 1860, the Australian Typographical Circular complained of unemployment among compositors, and there could have been no marked improvement until late in 1872.<sup>3</sup>

When the Melbourne Typographical Society was established in 1867, it attracted some of the casually-employed to its membership - how many, and for what motives, it is impossible to say. Some presumably would have joined on principle; others, for the hope of advantage in selection for a casual or permanent place on one of the dailies.<sup>4</sup> Their numbers were sufficient for the Australian Typographical Journal to concern itself greatly with the employment problems of Society members.

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<sup>1</sup>On the conditions of apprenticeship in country newspapers see A.T.J., vol.II, no.26, p.111; vol.VI, no.67, p.19; and vol.VIII, no.98, p.203.

<sup>2</sup>'Grass-hands' - then also called 'supernumeraries' or 'supps.' - were those casuals who had the privilege of relieving frame-holders who wanted a night off. 'Grass' is probably from the French 'grace'.

<sup>3</sup>I have deduced this date from the tactics of the M.T.S.

<sup>4</sup>The Herald was certainly a closed shop by 1875. See forward p. 79. The Age probably was also; see A.T.J., November 1911, p.5.

Their presence had other effects. The M.T.S. showed far less interest than the old V.T.A. in its declining years had shown in theories of action which assumed an identity of interest with those 'just a step above'. A membership no longer entirely convinced of the separate identity and superior status of the compositor sanctioned the approaches of its Executive to other unions for concerted action on common problems. The Society as well as the industry underwent a process of diversification.

#### The Victorian Typographical Union.

The Melbourne Typographical Society itself was a by-product of an ambitious plan to link the compositors of Ballarat, Geelong and Melbourne into a body called the Victorian Typographical Union. Inadequacy of record makes it only possible to guess at the reasons for its formation. The obvious analogy is with the National Typographical Association in northern England, whose founders had attempted to overcome the objections local master printers had to entering into an agreement when their nearby competition was not similarly bound. There was, of course, another advantage. During a strike, control of craftsmen close at hand increased the chances of success.<sup>1</sup>

In August 1866 the sole survivor of the fifties, the Ballarat Typographical Society, received a letter from an ephemeral typographical society that had sprung up at Geelong. The letter requested the Ballarat Society to appoint a delegate to a meeting in Melbourne 'for the purpose of forming a general trade society throughout the Colony'.<sup>2</sup> This meeting took place on 9 February 1867, and from it emerged the Melbourne Typographical Society,

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<sup>1</sup>Ballarat, Geelong and Melbourne were linked by rail in 1862. 'Rats' could have been transported from one place to another in a matter of hours.

<sup>2</sup>Ballarat Typographical Society Minutes, 4 August 1866.



which carried on negotiations with the Ballarat and Geelong Societies until 1 December,<sup>1</sup> when the three merged into the Victorian Typographical Union and reduced themselves to the status of District Boards.

The Union was to be governed by a Central Board, on which Melbourne, Ballarat and Geelong would be represented by five, three and two delegates respectively, and which was to meet annually or more frequently if necessary in Melbourne or whichever city it decided. District Boards were to draw up their by-laws, subject to the approval of the Board of Delegates, and pay one half of all entrance fees and subscriptions received from members into a Central Fund.

The V.T.U.'s life was short and unhappy. There was constant disagreement over powers of local Districts, and the Central Board;<sup>2</sup> over which items should be charged to the Central Fund, and which to the Local; over where the Central Board should sit and who should sit on it.<sup>3</sup> Proposals by Melbourne to situate the Central Board in Melbourne, and make the Board of the Melbourne District the Board of the V.T.U. were not acceptable.<sup>4</sup> The Rules were in a perpetual state of revision, and so unsure was the V.T.U. of its strength that it would not go as far as fixing rates of payment for its members in the different Districts. In the five years of its existence, it does not appear to have concerned itself with any industrial dispute, except by way of giving advice to a District, or granting a small donation from

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Ballarat District of V.T.U., title page

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of V.T.U. Delegate Meetings, 19 January and 15 March 1869.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 23 September 1869 and 27-28 January 1870.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 27-28 January and 17 August 1870.

the Central Fund.<sup>1</sup>

By January 1871 the V.T.U. was on its last legs. Ballarat delegates were not present at the Delegate Meeting, which lapsed for want of a quorum; Geelong had not paid its remittances to the General Fund, due the previous month. The last blow was delivered by the president of the Union himself, who decamped with moneys entrusted to him as Editor of the newly established Australasian Typographical Journal.<sup>2</sup> On 22 April a General Meeting of the Ballarat District adopted what was virtually a secession motion, namely that District Associations have complete control of their finances, and also of their affairs, until such time as they request delegates to be sent from the other Districts to arbitrate on such problems. The other two Districts had had enough, and separation of the Districts was agreed upon from the 30 September.<sup>3</sup> The Australasian Typographical Journal continued to be published by the Melbourne Typographical Society.

The Melbourne Typographical Society, 1867-73.

The first object of the M.T.S., as set down in its Rules of 1867, was the settlement of disputes by a committee of equal representatives of the Society and the employers, with an impartial chairman. But the Society showed a clear lack of faith in its own prescription. In February 1868, the Board of Management decided to put off

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<sup>1</sup> Even this could make trouble. See V.T.U. Delegate Meeting Minutes, 15 March 1869, when Melbourne delegates claimed that the Ballarat District had misused money granted them.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently about £15.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of V.T.U. Delegate Meetings, 18 November 1871. Ballarat kept up the fiction that it was a District of the V.T.U. for some years after.

conference with the employers 'till business got more brisk'. Almost by default, it began to look for help from other trade unions. As time went by, the Editor of the A.T.J. expounded the methods of voluntary arbitration with less enthusiasm. By 1872, he was reminding his readers that 'strikes are neither unreasonable nor unnecessary', and that 'with numbers of self-willed capitalists, talking is a mere waste of lungs, and to "strike work" is the only argument they can understand'.<sup>1</sup>

The root cause of this change of view was the persisting unemployment of compositors. The M.T.S. tried two main ways of overcoming it: to compel the indenturing of all apprentices, and to extend the eight-hour day to the printing industry.

The very meeting that postponed conference with the master printers 'till business got more brisk' also instructed its Secretary to

put himself in communication with the Secretary of the Eight Hours' Association, in order to get their co-operation together with the other trades in Melbourne in order to form a deputation to wait on the Attorney-General asking him to bring in some legislative enactment to compel masters taking apprentices to have them bound by indenture, as at home.<sup>2</sup>

At one stride, the M.T.S. concerned itself more with the trade union movement and with parliament than the old V.T.A. had ever dared. But the other Melbourne unions were too much worried about their own survival to be of much help. The mechanism that had grown up in the late fifties to combine political action by unions had decayed,

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.II, no.26, p.106.

<sup>2</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 8 February 1868.

and the Eight Hours' Association was now their only common organization. Its Secretary's reply showed its strength:

...while admitting the importance of the co-operation sought, (he) regretted that from the fact of their only being elected to carry out the demonstration in connection therewith he had no power in the matter but recommended their bringing the matter under the notice of the various trade societies.<sup>1</sup>

The various trade societies declined to reply to the M.T.S.'s letters, but it persisted.<sup>2</sup> At the Board Meeting of 5 June, the Secretary was able to report that a conference on the apprentice questions had been held with some of them. Unfortunately, 'very little progress' had been made; moreover

it was the expressed opinion of the majority who were present at those meetings that, before anything could be done in which the trades generally could assist, the Typographical Society would have to see the master printers on the subject, in order that any steps which might be taken by the society would not be opposed by the employers.<sup>3</sup>

The trade union movement in 1869 was a very weak reed on which to lean, but as it began to revive, so the M.T.S. became more enthusiastic about its prospects. By 1872 the Australasian Typographical Journal was advocating the organization of unionists into a fighting body:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 29 February 1868.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6 June and 5 September 1868.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5 June 1869.

If all trades had their unions, and all unions joined for the one object of maintaining their rights, they would form a mighty phalanx, such as no unscrupulous capitalist could bear down. To be prepared for war is certainly and positively the most certain way to avoid a war at all.<sup>1</sup>

But in the meantime, there was no mighty phalanx, the unscrupulous capitalists could not be approached on advantageous terms, members were out of work, and it was necessary to do something. The M.T.S. resolved to try parliament, and the subject on which it sought legislation was the eight-hour day.

The attitude of the M.T.S. towards the eight-hour day also differed significantly from that of its predecessor in the fifties. The Australasian Typographical Journal, on behalf of unemployed journeymen, warned those with lucrative frames in daily newspaper offices that

There are enough, and to spare, of first class workmen unemployed, willing and anxious to relieve their overworked brethren who are, in some instances, often toiling for sixteen hours out of the twenty-four.<sup>2</sup>

It was a matter of Christian charity to find work for these men; it was also a matter of elementary prudence.

The Society took the view that the best way to get them work was to prohibit boys from working on weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly newspapers. Enforcement of an eight-hour day for boys and young persons or the prohibition of their employment at night would severely limit the usefulness of boys to the employer, who

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<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., vol.II, no.24, p.90

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.I, no.7, p.49.

relied on keeping them at work for long hours to make up for their relative lack of speed. Besides, the long hours the lads worked were bad for their mental, moral and social development. The A.T.J. pointed out that over-working the boys

brings upon them not only the utmost physical frustration and premature death, but blunts their intellect, obfuscates their mental powers, saps their finer nervous sensibilities, and undermines their moral natures, by shutting them out from the opportunities of social intercourse and the exercise of the necessary means and time for healthful recreation.

The editorials in the A.T.J. that discussed this problem repeatedly suggested as its remedy not a 'conference with employers' but a Factory Act on the model of those recently passed by the Imperial Parliament, 'by the last of which no person employing youthful labour could keep them longer at work than eight hours per day'.<sup>2</sup>

Since the British Factory Acts not only prescribed an eight-hour day for young people, but insisted that it be worked within certain hours inconvenient for newspaper production, similar Acts in Victoria would prevent the employment of boys not only on weeklies, where the worst abuses of their labour were occurring, but also on the morning dailies, thereby securing 'the only privilege we have'.<sup>3</sup> All journeymen would have felt satisfaction at such a Factory Act, which would have served simultaneously

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.II, no.20, p.57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.II, no.20, p.57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vol.II, no.20, p.58.

both moral principle and economic advantage. The Society's agitation for a statutory eight-hour day in this period looked beyond its application to young people to its eventual application to journeymen in jobbing offices. This view had a significance in relation to British societies that will be referred to later.

This interesting development in M.T.S. policy did not get far in the seventies. From the Christmas season of 1872, the printing trade began to show unmistakable signs of recovery. By the end of the year, the M.T.S. felt itself in a strong enough position to be able to hold its long-delayed conference with the Master printers. It submitted the following propositions:

1. That all apprentices shall be legally bound, and shall serve a period of five years. That all firms be allowed two apprentices, and one additional apprentice for every three journeymen permanently employed. The present engagement of employers not to be interfered with.
2. That in weekly newspaper offices, where there is no other description of work performed, the rate shall be as follows: one journeyman for every three apprentices.
3. That all apprentices who have served a term of five years shall be entitled at once to the rights and privileges of journeymen.
4. That the proper time for apprenticing youths to newspapers to be fixed at 16 years of age.

#### DAILY NEWSPAPERS

That the charges for standing time<sup>1</sup> on daily newspapers, after copy has been called, to be at the following rate:- Ten minutes as quarter of an hour, twenty-five minutes as

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<sup>1</sup> 'Standing time' is time spent waiting for copy.

half an hour, thirty-five minutes as three quarters of an hour, and fifty minutes as one hour - at the rate of 1s. per hour.

That the call for extraordinaries, or second editions, be at the rate of three hours. Time work at the rate of 1s.6d. and 1s.8d. per hour.<sup>1</sup>

These claims became the basis of the first Agreement in the Australian printing industry.

Negotiations between the masters and the M.T.S. were protracted, and when finally the Agreement was drawn up, it did not come into force until 1 July 1873. By then, the Society's claims had suffered several changes of detail,<sup>2</sup> and one most important amendment. The masters insisted on increasing the proportion of apprentices to journeymen from one to three, to one to two, and the Society conceded.<sup>3</sup> Since the 'present engagements of employers' were 'not to be interfered with', the Agreement made generous allowance for replacing those journeymen who left the trade, and adding the number that even rapid expansion suggested. Since it bound only the proprietors of daily newspapers and those who were known in the city of Melbourne as 'fair employers', it was likely to have little restraint on the number of boys

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<sup>1</sup>M.T.S. Minutes, 23 November 1872.

<sup>2</sup>For the text of the completed agreement, see M.T.S. Minutes, 28 June 1873.

<sup>3</sup>The time-honoured proportion of apprentices to journeymen was one to three, not one to two. But in the quarter century between 1848 and 1873, the Typographical Association alone among British printing unions had fixed and consistently attempted to enforce a proportion of any description. See Child, Industrial Relations in the British Printing Industry, chapter XII.



actually employed.<sup>1</sup>

After the signing of the Agreement, the Australasian Typographical Journal became the responsibility of George Wilson Hall, whom the Society appointed as its first permanent Secretary in 1873. The Agreement's very existence required that Hall be more cautious of what he had to say about strikes than former editors of the A.T.J. :

For a defence trade societies must exist, and where they are conducted on fair and honourable principles it is creditable to be associated with them. We repeat we do not approve of arbitrary laws; we discountenance harsh measures; and denounce physical force. But we hold for justice and firmness, and maintain from good authority and experience, that it is the duty of every working man to support a trade society.<sup>2</sup>

What this meant in practice is best illustrated by the Society's continued negotiation with other associations of skilled tradesmen, and the action they took in defence of the Agreement.

In October 1873, the Board of Management recommended to a general meeting that the M.T.S. affiliate with a newly organized amalgamation of unions called the United Trades Association whose main object appears to have been the creation by levy of a central fund from which grants would be made to constituent unions when on strike.<sup>3</sup> The General Meeting, however, postponed the question until the Annual General Meeting in January.

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<sup>1</sup>Massina and Co. were later to claim that this Agreement bound them to nothing at all. See A.T.J., vol.X, no.115, p.36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.IV, no.40, p.9.

<sup>3</sup>M.T.S. Minutes, 25 October 1873. On the V.T.A. see J. Hagan, 'The D.A.V., Trade and Labour in the Seventies' in Labour History, no.9, November 1965.

The Annual General Meeting threw the proposition out,<sup>1</sup> for by this time the M.T.S. apparently had plans for an amalgamated body of its own design. In April 1874 the A.T.J. came out with an editorial in praise of the Congress of Trades Unions at Sheffield, where Mr. A.J. Mundella reported that 'the minds of the working men were thoroughly imbued (sic) with the principle of arbitration, (and) that there were now 300,000 men governed by it'. The A.T.J. commented:

No sensible man approves of strikes, nor would he be mixed up with them if he could see a way out. This mighty congress, though possessing so much power, is willing to come to a fair and equitable understanding in regard to trade matters. What a grand step in the right direction! Let us ask what is to prevent the trades in this colony from being banded together for the same noble object. Some trades are already united for eight hours; let them also show a like spirit in reference to disputes which arise between employer and employed. To be successful there must be a union of all trades; two or three trades can achieve nothing. Why should not the printers - considering their high position - take the lead in this matter?<sup>2</sup>

Three months later, the A.T.J. reported a meeting held on 13 June representing 22 trades and 4,000 members which joined an amalgamated body 'so ably initiated by the Melbourne Typographical Society'. This organization called itself the Trades and Labour Council of Victoria, and at its Half-Yearly General Meeting, the M.T.S. formally affiliated with it.<sup>3</sup> Like the United Trades Association,

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.IV, no.40, p.11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol.IV, no.42, p.25.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol.IV, no.46, pp.61-2.

the Council aimed at building a fund on which men on strike could operate. Interest in Trade Union bodies of this kind marked the M.T.S. off from its British equivalents in a way that will be referred to later.

Besides being concerned with the prospective strength it could draw from a united trade union movement, the Society was intent on the immediate defence of its Agreement with the Master Printers. When questioned about the number of boys he employed Mr Moore (of Fergusson and Moore) stated

that he would not be dictated to be either society or master printers; that he had not signed the resolutions nor had stated that he would abide by them.<sup>1</sup>

In view of a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for strike action on the part of the Chapel at Fergusson and Moore's, the Board seized upon a statement by Mr Moore that he would give no cause for complaint, and the matter went no further.<sup>2</sup> The other large proprietor who was not a signatory did not get off so easily. In February, the Society investigated the firm of Mason and Firth, and discovered that it had taken on five more boys, although the number of lads in the shop already exceeded the number permitted by the proportion set out in the Agreement. It called a meeting of the trade, closed the office, struck a levy and made arrangements for strike pay. The overseer and nearly all the men came out. Some formed a co-operative, and others quickly found employment, so that before the quarter was up, all but one were off the funds. Mason and Firth had to do without Society hands for a long time to come.

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<sup>1</sup>M.T.S. Minutes, 23 December 1873.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 24 December 1873.

One feature of the strike deserves special comment. The meeting the Society called to discuss the dispute was not a meeting of its members alone, but a meeting of the trade. David Syme, proprietor of the Age, presided. Another master printer moved the motion that endorsed the action of the Society. The A.T.J. reminded its readers that 'The battle is not ours alone; we are fighting for those employers who signed the resolutions'.<sup>1</sup> Now that the Society had gathered some strength, it was able to exercise some influence in trade matters on behalf of the 'fair' employer, in the way that the V.T.A. had anticipated in the late fifties. But in 1874, the alliance was one inspired more by a tactical sense; there was no talk about the interests of employers and employees being identical.

The M.T.S. also conducted another strike in enforcement of its Agreement, and in this dispute it brought the full force of its trade union alliances to bear. There had been trouble at the Herald for some months over the payment of standing time, but in February 1875 its manager determined to employ boys in the production of the daily paper, and (possibly as an act of provocation) hired as a compositor 'a notorious scoundrel' abhorrent to Society men. Faced with simultaneous attacks on two of their most cherished privileges, the men came out, and the M.T.S. laid its case before the Trades and Labour Council. The Council added £134 to Society funds<sup>2</sup> in its attempt to keep 'rats' away; but the Herald continued to appear, and functioned as a non-union shop for some years to come.

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.IV, no.41, p.17

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol.V, no.59, p.66.

This was a severe enough reverse for the M.T.S. but for the Trades and Labour Council it was practically ruin. The Minutes of the Ballarat Typographical Society in October 1875 expressed regret at 'the decay of the Trades and Labour Council'.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter it passes from view. Disaster had followed its only major action; failure had attended all its small affairs.<sup>2</sup>

### The Limits of Action

The check to the economy's expansion that had assisted the demise of the Trades and Labour Council also presented the M.T.S. again with the problems of its unemployed. A reserve of unemployed men always made it difficult to maintain piece rates and wages. By the seventies, British unions were finding schemes of unemployment benefit useful in controlling those of its members who might have been prepared to work for less than the union rules allowed. Their Executives were increasingly inclined to take the view that men unemployed were in fact men on strike against lower wages. They were therefore prepared to raise unemployment benefit payments to the same amounts as their rules provided for strike pay. But in the seventies the M.T.S. did not manage to adopt a scheme of unemployment benefit that was of use either to the Society or its individual members.

It did manage to make some progress towards such a scheme. The members of the M.T.S. were far less insular than members of the old V.T.A. had been. They were

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<sup>1</sup>Ballarat Typographical Society Minutes, 13 October 1875.

<sup>2</sup>The Council also attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the Government to bring in a Bill to establish Courts of Arbitration.

prepared and even eager to take concerted action with brother trade unionists. Their brother trade unionists shared with them the distinguishing qualification of an indenture. For the unskilled, Society men had a general contempt, and they nourished a special distaste for 'the unskilled' within their industry born of unsuccessful competition for jobs with boys and 'improvers'. Commenting on a suggestion that unindentured tradesmen should be allowed to join the M.T.S., 'Caxton' remarked that

We should have to call our Society some such name as the following: 'The Victorian Society of Compositors and Would-be Compositors', or we might become large-hearted and admit also the 'devils' (and) errand-boys.<sup>1</sup>

Although Society rules provided for the admission of those without indentures 'who could otherwise satisfy', few if any unindentured tradesmen obtained membership. The Society therefore denied itself the opportunity of controlling those most likely to threaten the ruling rate when times were hard.

There was also considerable resistance to payment of relief to those Society members who had an undoubted right to the trade. The fate of the Melbourne Provident Typographical Society reinforced memories of British unions bankrupted by benefit payments. Other opposition came from those in well paid and permanent jobs who saw themselves as having to fund the scheme. Some of these had comfortable reasons for resisting any scheme to pay good money to the unemployed:

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<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., vol.II, no.18, p.42.

In nine cases out of every ten these men are solely blamable for the degrading position they find themselves in, and whilst they find their more fortunate brethren soft enough to listen to their sweet entreaties, this deplorable state of things will go on to the end of all time. Some kindly disposed persons argue that 'it is better to subscribe to the relief of these people to get rid of them'; but I maintain it is only encouraging them in a very bad and unprincipled practice....<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Smiles had more than a few devotees on the Board of Management. The unemployed had to rely on others to put their point of view at Board meetings, since representatives were elected on the basis of one delegate for every ten employed at each shop.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the unemployed called meetings of their own to petition the Board.

The first of these, held early in 1871, was graced by the President and Secretary of the Society. It passed resolutions seeking the establishment of relief and emigration funds, protection against imported work, representation of the unemployed on the Board of Management, and Society influence to eliminate overtime. It also requested the Board to consider its resolutions on the following Saturday.<sup>3</sup>

This meeting was duly called by the President, but it lapsed for want of a quorum. So did the next. And the next. When a Special Meeting did finally eventuate on 10 June, it was called to discuss the proposal of Ballarat to separate the districts of the Victorian

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.III, no.27, p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Except for a Trade Representative, who was elected by all members.

<sup>3</sup>M.T.S. Minutes, 16 April 1871.

Typographical Union. The only resolution from the unemployed to see light at this meeting was the one on protection, and that was referred back to the Board, which took no action.

But sufficient Board members were perturbed about the problem to induce the Board to take up the question again.<sup>1</sup> In September 1871, just after the Society had succeeded in winning strong support from outside its ranks to resist a contemplated reduction in the rate at Fergusson and Moore's, a special committee was appointed to attract membership by an Appeal to the trade. The Appeal Circular offered two benefits: one for those who left their 'situations in consequence of a strike', and one for those who were simply unemployed. The first paid 30 shillings a week, raised by compulsory levy, and the second five shillings a week out of Society funds to those who had been members for six months. The proposition interested very few. The trade meeting called to consider the Appeal Committee's suggestions was sparsely attended, and the Society men present shelved them.<sup>2</sup>

When the pinch of 1875 increased the numbers of the unemployed, the whole unhappy theme played itself out again with minor variations. In April, compositors out of work made an appeal to the Board for relief.<sup>3</sup> The Board recommended to the Half-Yearly Meeting the establishment of a Relief Fund based on an extra contribution of 6d. a

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. A.T.J., vol.I, no.13, p.5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.II, no.14, p.12. Shortly after, it seems, both Society and non-Society unemployed held a meeting of their own at which they attempted to carry motions for a reduction in the setting rate in default of relief payments. See A.T.J., vol.II, no.17, p.38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vol.V, no.55, p.35.



quarter on all employed. Those wishing to benefit would have to pay an extra sixpence each week.<sup>1</sup> If the unemployed were to be helped, they had to help themselves when able. Only 31 members indicated their willingness to join the scheme, and a month later the number had not increased. In June 1876, the A.T.J. reported that 'the relief fund is where it was, waiting the exhibition of a desire to contribute on the part of those who will benefit'.<sup>2</sup>

By that time, recovery was not far away, and the return of prosperity put off the problem once again. In March 1877, there were 34 'extensive' printing works in the Colony; only two years later there were 55!<sup>3</sup> G.W. Hall's Trade Reports, normally written to deter migrant compositors from trying their luck in Melbourne, were even prepared to concede on occasion that all hands were fully employed, and that trade was flourishing.

The most striking thing about this renewed prosperity was the paralysing effect it had on the political activities of the Society. After 1876, reports of wayzgooses, rifle shooting matches, cricket and football challenges, dramatic evenings and concerts began to fill the pages of the A.T.J. Discussion of the eight-hour day, apprentice ratios, factory acts, and trades and labour councils disappeared. The traditions of self-help and craft distinction strengthened. The Printers' Library built up its stock to 1600 volumes, and there was an expansion of a series of articles in the A.T.J. on

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.V, no.59, p.66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.VI, no.68, p.27.

<sup>3</sup>Statistical Register of Victoria, part V, 1877 and 1879.

compositors who had vindicated Samuel Smiles by their advancement.<sup>1</sup> Readers noted that, among others, the craft had produced 26 newspaper proprietors, seven parliamentarians, four managers of large businesses, two Lord Mayors, and two squatters. There were also an odd dozen said to have become famous as authors, poets, actors, and critics; and one historian and one inventor. The phenomenal trade expansion of 1877-79 was sufficient to check abruptly the Society's political development.

### The V.T.U., the M.T.S., and the British Typographical Societies

The diversification of the Victorian printing industry in the sixties and seventies intensified the boy labour problem that had become apparent by the late fifties. To combat it, the Victorian societies adopted the same solution as the National Typographical Association, and its successor, the Provincial Typographical Association. They sought to reach an agreement with employers that would limit the number of entrants into the trade, and by forming local societies into an association that would cover all likely competitors, they hoped to remove one of the masters' common objections to entering such an agreement. As a new and weak union the V.T.U. did not have in mind the strike policy that the N.T.A. had adopted to coerce reluctant employers. Its hopes rested on its faith in the reasonableness of employers.

The same faith led the M.T.S. to adopt (as had the V.T.A. before it) rules for the arbitral settlement of differences with employers. British typographical societies made sparing use of arbitration in this period; the M.T.S.

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<sup>1</sup>This series began in 1873, soon after the first revival of trade in the seventies.

made no use of it at all. Records are not detailed enough to allow much more than a guess at the reasons, and it seems likely that these were much the same in the compositors' new land as in their old.

But the reservations the M.T.S. held about the 'reasonableness' of employers in the seventies were somewhat more marked than those generally held by British typographical societies. One of the external signs of the M.T.S.'s suspicion is its persistent advocacy of joint action by trade unions and its formation of the Trades and Labour Council. British typographical societies were active in the formation of trade union associations at this time, and took a regular part in the functions of the Trade Union Congress, but there was an important difference between the general attitude of the British societies and that of the M.T.S. The kind of trades union association that the M.T.S. advocated, and the one that it formed, was one concerned with the building up of a strike fund, with 'preparing for war'. Further, the M.T.S. was far less given to assertions of its belief in the identity of interest between employer and employee than were the British unions. The A.T.J. even got so far as to advocate the extension of the eight-hour day to jobbing shops by act of parliament - a proposition rejected by the London Society of Compositors and the Typographical Association as late as 1887.

Shortage of record makes it difficult to explain this difference in attitude with any degree of certainty. We know very little of the personal views or influence of the members, although it seems that the prestige of George Wilson Hall, the editor of the A.T.J. was high, and the A.T.J. was an enthusiastic advocate of 'preparing for war'.

But it seems unlikely that Hall would have been able to carry the Society with him had not circumstance assisted. By the seventies, compositors in Melbourne had seen it demonstrated that the Golden Age was past, and that the worst features of the British industry were recurring in the Colony. The experience of the fifties must have made it difficult for some of them at least to accept a return to British conditions easily.

Though the M.T.S. was markedly more sceptical of the notion that the interests of employers and employees were identical than the British societies were, it had by no means rejected it entirely. Nor was it prepared to go any distance towards accepting the idea that compositors were part of a working class that had interests distinct from and opposed to those of their employers. Most members of the M.T.S. retained such a strong sense of their apartness that, like the members of the Typographical Association, they were not prepared to admit as members those who could not show an indenture. They were not even prepared to make the concession that the London Society of Compositors made in this period - to open their ranks to all those who had established their right to the trade by continuous employment as journeymen for a number of years. All British societies had established permanent unemployment benefit funds based on compulsory contribution by 1880; the M.T.S. failed to do so. Most of the opposition's arguments assumed that those who were unemployed were unemployed deservedly.

By 1879 the M.T.S. had exhibited more doubt about the harmony of interest between employer and employee than its contemporary British societies. Most of its members however were at least as convinced as their British counter-

parts that composers' societies were for superior workmen only, and that such men need not share the misfortunes of others.

## CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIETIES IN THE EIGHTIES

In the years of plenty between 1880 and 1890, trade unions multiplied, took on new purposes, and employed new methods. By 1889, there was at least one Typographical Society in each colony,<sup>1</sup> and they were joined in a confederation known as the Australasian Typographical Union.

The individual Societies shared much common policy. They became prepared to accept as members men who had no indenture to show; they adopted extensive insurance schemes; they established close contact with bodies which aimed to co-ordinate the action of trade unions; and they began to show some interest in the representation of a labour movement in parliament.

But the most dramatic change was in their methods of bargaining. In the early eighties, most of the Societies were allies of the 'fair' employer against his 'unfair' competitors. By the late eighties, they were placing frank reliance on threat of strike against all employers. In Adelaide, the South Australian Typographical Association organized the most costly strike the city had so far seen. In Brisbane, the Queensland Typographical Association organized a general strike of the printing trade. Both

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<sup>1</sup>The Perth Society was not properly established until 1890, and is treated in the next chapter. The Tasmanian Societies are scarcely dealt with in this History at all. Their records prior to 1940 have not survived, and their influence on other Societies seems to have been negligible.

these strikes raised beforehand those issues that other unions fought out in the Great Strikes of the nineties.

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### The Economy, the Trade Unions, and the Printing Industry

After 1879, the Australian economy resumed its expansion, and it continued almost without a check through the eighties. Heavy foreign borrowing by governments and by private firms resulted in spectacular rises in the mileage of railways and the number of buildings under construction. Primary industries, especially wool-growing, benefited also from the application of overseas capital, and raised their outputs appreciably. In all, Australian gross domestic production increased by over half between 1880 and 1889.<sup>1</sup> The rate of immigration was high, and 'real' wages rose fairly steadily throughout the period.

In these conditions, the Australian trade union movement made remarkable progress. Trades and Labour Councils were organized in Brisbane and Adelaide, the long established Melbourne Trades Hall Council adopted new and far-reaching policies, and the Sydney Trades and Labour Council had affiliated to it half of the hundred unions that existed in N.S.W. by 1890. From 1884, Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses were almost annual events.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the eighties, the proportion of workmen in Australia

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<sup>1</sup> At constant prices. Butlin estimates that Australian Gross Domestic Product was worth £143.2 million in 1881, and £203.3 million in 1889. Population in these years increased from 2,306,736 to 3,062,477.

<sup>2</sup> J.T. Sutcliffe, A History of Trade Unionism in Australia, Melbourne, 1921, pp.46-50.

who were trade unionists was greater than in any other country.<sup>1</sup>

This was due not so much to the activity of the craft unions organized in the Trades and Labour Councils as to the phenomenal growth of the 'new' unions. In some ways, these differed from the craft unions to an important degree. First, they were made up entirely of unskilled men, or men for whose occupations there were no formal apprenticeships - shearers, miners, wharf labourers, seamen. Second, they depended for their bargaining power almost solely on their ability to withhold all available labour. Third, they were the unions in which the complex forces of nationalism, radicalism, and working class sentiment were most strongly at work.<sup>2</sup>

From the fifties, there had been a steady assumption in Australian radical thought that the people in the new land of opportunity must avoid the mistakes of the old country and in particular the evil of class oppression. This attitude was most strongly marked among the unions of unskilled workers that welcomed all men to their membership, whose members had no individual skills to bargain with, and who understood that their only strength came from unity.

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<sup>1</sup>It was still probably less than one fifth. See Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics, p.133.

<sup>2</sup>Differences between the 'old' and 'new' unions have been frequently exaggerated. Writers on the 'new' unions have alleged differences on the grounds of lower entrance fees and dues, insistence on the closed shop, and a willingness to accept all men on the job. But in a good many of the 'old' unions entrance fees and dues were low, and the closed shop was well recognized as a most desirable end. During the eighties, some craft unions relaxed membership qualifications considerably.



As self-conscious nationalists who looked to the making of a new and better society, they showed quick interest in utopias. Hence the popularity of Henry George, and his single tax panacea for all social ills; and the great success of Bellamy's Looking Backwards, a vision of a society in which socialist organization had banished want. In 1889 William Lane, Bellamy's great apostle in Australia, strongly influenced the planning of a vast Australian Labour Federation which would avoid the narrow interests of the craft-dominated Trades Halls. By 1890 the unions of six districts had joined in what was intended to become the Queensland Province of the Federation, and that body had adopted a political platform whose aims included the nationalization of the means of production and exchange.

The Queensland Province of the Australian Labour Federation considered it was necessary for the attainment of the workers' millennium that the labour movement be represented in parliament by its own men. Trades and Labour Councils in other colonies had by then reached the same conclusion, but less wholeheartedly. Before the eighties ended, there had been in each colony a small group of men who had stood for election to parliament 'in the labour interest'. There was as yet no separate Labor Party, but its coming was close enough to compel unions to begin defining their attitude to involvement in party politics.

The typographical societies did not escape the influence of these changes in the trade union movement, but they were far more directly affected by the changes that took place in the printing industry. As in the seventies, the amount of jobbing work increased, but book printing remained a commercial side line. The newspaper industry remained the main source of printing employment, though

the metropolitan dailies ceased to supply the majority of the Society's members.<sup>1</sup>

The metropolitan dailies themselves expanded greatly in size and circulation. Design and layout remained the same through the decade, but the reader got more for his penny or twopence. The Sydney Morning Herald was producing a 28-page Saturday issue by 1886, and in Melbourne soon after, the Age was offering the same for a penny less. Its circulation by October 1888 was above 80,000 - over double the figure that the A.T.J. had noted in 1879 as being 'without precedent in Australian journalism'. The Age and the Sydney Morning Herald had adopted web-fed machinery that made use of stereotype plates in the seventies. As their circulation rose, so too did that of the Argus in 1882 and the Sydney Daily Telegraph in 1885. Both the Adelaide dailies adopted the same system in 1892. But still there were no technical changes in the composing room. Though some dailies in England and the United States were by this time making regular use of type-setting machinery, scarcely any appeared in Australia in the eighties. Bigger papers, longer runs, and multiple editions required the employment of increasing numbers of men on hand-setting.

Changes in the jobbing trade were more complicated. With the increase in prosperity and the advance of the eight-hour day, there were opportunities now for weeklies

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<sup>1</sup>In June 1890, the N.S.W.T.A. published a list of its members arranged according to the offices in which they worked. Newspaper offices accounted for 387 members, and jobbing for 427. In April, 1888, the A.T.J. reported that morning dailies employed only 280 of the M.T.S.'s 900 members. But in both Sydney and Melbourne, the jobbing offices published numerous suburban weeklies and trade papers.

and periodicals of a different kind. In March 1882, the A.T.J. recorded the issue of 'a new publication...the Bicycle...devoted to the interests of those using such vehicles'. 'What next?' it asked. Three months later it answered itself by noting the first number of Football Times.

Productions of this kind followed standard technical procedure, but as it coped with the increasing demand of advertisers, the industry pushed its typographical resources to the limit. New and hideous founts appeared in typefounders' catalogues. There was a mania for medallions, 'Japanese' borders, and designs in bent brass rule. Wood cuts and wood-engravings established themselves as standard advertising techniques. Calendars and the new Christmas greeting cards blossomed in carmine and gold as ink-makers promoted their first large-scale experiments in colour.

These innovations amounted to no revolution. Technical changes in the Australian printing industry of the eighties merely represented the trade of Caxton pushed to its final and exhausted limit. The industry remained essentially a hand letterpress industry that had been speeded up by the application of steam and gas engines to the presses.<sup>1</sup> The great printing inventions of the eighties had no effect in the Australian industry in this decade.<sup>2</sup> Despite some

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<sup>1</sup>Sometimes the old and new forms of power existed side by side. At Bendigo, the Advertiser installed a powerful gas engine about the same time as the Evening News introduced a Chinaman 'to turn the wheel of the poster-machine'. A.T.J., Vol.XIII, no.150.

<sup>2</sup>Type setting machines were introduced on the Sydney Evening News in 1887, but no other paper adopted them in the eighties. The Sydney Bulletin introduced new line-engraving plant in 1885, but elsewhere the wood cuts and hand-engravings remained unchallenged.

cautious combination of lithographic and letterpress work, lithography still employed only a handful of men in Sydney and Melbourne by 1890.<sup>1</sup> The expansion of the printing trade continued without any technical disturbance that could contribute to unemployment.

Like the fifties, the eighties were years in which many journeymen became masters. Once trade recovered after the recession of 1879-80,

the call upon printers proved to be of such magnitude that existing houses were totally unable to execute the great amount of work offering, and it became, not a question of what particular house would get the work, but who was in a position to take fresh orders.<sup>2</sup>

Even allowing for some exaggeration, it seems true that the low cost of the equipment necessary for a small jobbing shop made master printing in these circumstances a very tempting adventure for ambitious journeymen. Cowan's Printers' Bulletin for November 1888 advertised for £41 a new 'Pearl' platen, which 'ran easily by treadle, and (on which) a smart lad could run over 2,000 an hour', and four years before the A.T.J. had advertised a complete small printing plant 'in the heart of the city' for £65. Sands and McDougall's Directory for Melbourne and suburbs listed 31 'printing establishments' in 1880, 61 in 1884, and 91 in 1890. In Sydney the expansion was of very much the same order. At least half of these new 'little masters'

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<sup>1</sup>In 1890 the Victorian Government Statistician still listed only one 'substantial' lithographic works in Victoria.

<sup>2</sup>James Pratt, writing on the Melbourne printing trade in the eighties in R. Collie and Co's Monthly Circular for July 1899.

seem to have been recently journeymen, and much the same process should explain the great increase in the number of country newspapers between 1880 and 1890.<sup>1</sup>

In both New South Wales and Victoria their number rose, but it did so most rapidly in N.S.W. In that colony, there had been 81 country newspapers in 1875. There were 143 by 1886, and 191 in 1891.<sup>2</sup> Well over half of these were weeklies or bi-weeklies, able to be produced by a man and a boy or two. There was still a frontier that offered the journeyman a substantial chance of emancipation.

In both city and country, the ambitious young master printer often found himself tendering in a highly competitive market, and his lack of capital suggested the economies that seemed possible if he employed boys instead of men. The boom of the eighties perpetuated the 'boy problem' of the seventies, and the typographical societies had occasion in both decades to remark that the ex-journeyman was often the worst employer. Certainly, the most consistent violators of Society apprentice ratios were the owners of small suburban and country offices.

As in the seventies, the larger firms by contrast were usually model employers, and the new typographical fashions confirmed this feature of the industry. During the eighties,

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<sup>1</sup> Supporting evidence comes from the frequent mention in the A.T.J. of ex-compositors, who 'now run a country newspaper' or 'have started for themselves in the suburbs'. There are about two dozen such entries in the eighties, but there would have been many ventures the A.T.J. did not record.

<sup>2</sup> (Ed. A.T. Shakespeare, After Fifty Years (commemorating the Fiftieth Annual Conference of the N.S.W. Country Press Association), Wollongong, 1949.

the big firms got much bigger and sometimes very quickly.<sup>1</sup> Economies of scale helped them to offer superior competition on many jobs, and the cultivation of a taste among customers for elaborate type-faces and designs meant a virtual monopoly of all intricate printing for the larger firms, since their less highly-capitalized rivals could not afford to invest large sums in rarely used founts of type. This 'superior' printing required that the large firms employ journeymen, and good journeymen at that; since they had no use for boys in large numbers, the Society apprentice ratio was adequate for them.

Good relations between the typographical societies and the more substantial firms were often based on more than this. The people who did 'superior printing' were seldom lucky enough to have enough of it to occupy their journeymen completely. To keep them busy, they had to compete for run-of-the-mill work with smaller firms, whose employment of boys they looked on as unfair competition. Despite specialization, strict enforcement of apprentice ratios continued to be of advantage to the larger firms in the eighties, and typographical societies could still confidently approach the larger firms for help in this matter. Those who paid good tradesmen high wages were also not averse to seeing some small rise in the general level of wages throughout the trade. Hence the Societies' willingness to help these men form Master Printers' Associations.

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<sup>1</sup> Again, the data is vague, but their building programs are a good crude index of these firms' expansion. In Melbourne, for example, Sands and McDougall moved four times to larger premises between 1878 and 1889. By 1888, they had 320 employees. See the Australian Printer July and October, 1952.

This tactic had another end in view as well. By the eighties, the firms that employed the most men were those who had been in business the longest. Their founders had either transferred control or were thinking of doing so. In both Sydney and Melbourne, the sons of the original master printers often succeeded their fathers and the same paternal relations that had existed between the old man and his few journeymen stood as a model for the son, even when a firm had grown in size from a dozen employees to a hundred.<sup>1</sup> When in the eighties the process of designing buildings specifically as printing factories began, this paid dividends for their employees in the form of more pleasant working conditions. But the same paternal attitude made things difficult for the typographical societies, who found satisfied employees unwilling to join, and paternal employers unwilling to recognize them. The formation of a Master Printers' Association was a lever on some employers for their recognition of the Society. If they wanted the Society to protect them against unfair competition, then they would have to allow it to speak for their employees. A good deal of the Societies' talk in this period about the common interests of employers and employees needs to be understood in these terms.

These years of expansion in the printing industry resulted in the formation of larger firms whose tradesmen worked in steady employment under improving conditions for

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<sup>1</sup> This tradition of family control is still strong. In Sydney, John Fairfax, John Sands, W.C. Penfold; and in Melbourne, Sands and McDougall, Troedels, Mason, Firth and McCutcheon, all very large firms, have remained in family hands for over a century. Several other large shops have seen at least two generations of family control since 1900. See the Australasian Printer, 1952-54.

high wages. On the other hand, the same expansions also produced in the eighties what it had in the seventies - a class of ill-trained 'boys' grown into men who, even in fair times eked out an existence as 'casuals' in the jobbing shops on piece rates that left them lower paid than unskilled labourers. In the seasonal and trade depressions of the eighties, they were the first to go. Ambitions as a master printer were not for them.

As the number of these people continued to increase so the argument for their recognition by the typographical societies became stronger. The societies had also to reckon with another effect of industrial expansion. It was no longer possible to think of the printing trade as consisting of compositors and a few pressmen and machinists. The new rotary machines that the metropolitan dailies had installed required increasing numbers of stereotypers, machine minders, brakesmen, oilers and reelmen. In the jobbing shops, the numbers of lithographers, bookbinders, feeders and fliers rose. Lithographing and bookbinding were old-established crafts, with regular apprenticeship and trade societies of their own. Of the others, stereotypers and machine minders at least were skilled men, but there was no apprenticeship to their trade. Were the typographical societies going to continue insisting on an indenture?

Put broadly, the problem that the industrial expansions of the eighties seemed to propound for them was this: whether to limit themselves to preserving the privileges of their craft, or to take on the less skilled and with them those problems that might well lead to greater involvement in the trade union movement and in politics? As time passed, it became plainer that this was no choice at all, and that



the protection of craft privilege depended on a closer organization of the less skilled. Thus despite its refusal to admit unindentured men in the seventies, the Melbourne Typographical Society began to reconsider its decision in the early eighties.

### The Melbourne Typographical Society

It was not until the spring of 1880, with the added stimulus of the Exhibition, that the Victorian printing industry began to work at anything like the pace it had developed in 1878. But thenceforth there was steady improvement, until the winter of 1885. The number of Victorian printing offices that the Statistical Register classified as 'extensive' increased only from 60 to 62 in 1879-80; but they doubled that number between 1880 and 1884.<sup>1</sup> The number of printing shops in Melbourne itself also doubled in the same period.<sup>2</sup>

Competition for business was therefore keen, even in prosperous times. Massina and Co. introduced girls into their office, but the M.T.S. managed to cope with this problem satisfactorily;<sup>3</sup> as in the seventies, what it could not control was the unlimited employment of boys in country and suburban offices and their depressing effect on printers' wages. In September 1880, when trade was showing some recovery, the A.T.J. warned the Society against once

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<sup>1</sup>Statistical Register of the Colony of Victoria, 1884, part VI production, p.53. The number in 1884 was 124.

<sup>2</sup>Sands and McDougall, Melbourne Directories, 1880-85.

<sup>3</sup>A.T.J., vol.XIV, no.164, p.477. The Society closed the office, and did not reopen it until it got an agreement that no more girls would be put on, and girls employed not replaced as they left. M.T.S. Minutes, 5 May 1883.

more failing to resist the seductions of prosperity:

We have been sleeping in the lap of a Delilah,  
and now the Philistines are upon us. We are  
now in the unenviable position of being the  
worst paid and the hardest worked trade in the  
colonies, with the longer hours of labor....  
'How are the mighty fallen!' Ichabod! <sup>1</sup>

The Society heeded the warning, and began once more to apply those policies it had abandoned in the boom years of the seventies. First it made yet another attempt to organise other trades unions into a body with the purposes of a modern Trades and Labour Council. This organization was known as the Labour League,<sup>2</sup> but like its predecessors it too died almost at birth. Its early decease left the M.T.S. with only one alternative if it were to cope with the boy problem that threatened the employment of its members.

This was to seek intervention by the Government. A simple request for restriction of boy labour by compulsory indenturing and enforcement of the Society's apprentice ratio was too much a sectional matter for the legislature, but it was the genius of the M.T.S. to see that the same end could be achieved in another way. As ex-members of British Unions, a good many of its members knew that Factory Acts in the Old Country limited and even prohibited the employment of boys in certain industries at night. Why should the Victorian printing trade not be regulated in the same way? The Board took up the question of a Factory Act with such vigour that it developed and led a trades union Factory Act agitation.

The Society by now ran no great risk from the introduction of this degree of 'politics' into its affairs.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.X, no.119, p.67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.XI, no.125, p.118.

It was doing no more than asking Parliament to enact legislation of a kind long accepted in Britain; and British Unions generally accepted Factory Act legislation as not being 'political' in character. Further, the party loyalties of workmen were far less divided in Victoria than elsewhere in the Australian colonies. By 1880, Protection had triumphed over Free Trade as the settled fiscal policy of the Colony, and the old controversy was almost dead. Many trade union leaders were active in the National Reform and Protection League, whose candidates received overwhelming support from working men.

In 1873, the Victorian Parliament had passed Australia's first Factory Act. Its occasion had been the 'sweating' of sewing girls, but since the Act applied only to factories where more than ten people were employed and most of the exponents of 'sweating' ran small shops, it was clearly inadequate. In 1879, a group of manufacturers led by John Parry, a large clothing manufacturer, drafted an improved Factory Bill and presented it to the Chief Secretary, and about this time the Age began to add its powerful influence. There matters stood when the M.T.S. became interested in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

The M.T.S. arranged a few deputations with other unions to members of the Government, and then began a public campaign. On the motion of E.W. Sullivan the Board of Management resolved on a giant meeting to forward the revision of the Factory Act of 1873.<sup>2</sup> Present on the platform on the night of 13 September were Messrs. Deakin, Smith and Hall, M's.L.A., the Bishop of Melbourne, and one

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed discussion of the Factory Act agitation, see J. Hagan, 'Employers, Trade Unions, and the First Victorian Factory Acts', in Labour History, no.7, November 1964.

<sup>2</sup>M.T.S. Minutes, 24 July 1880. E.W. Sullivan is better known as E.W. O'Sullivan.

or two employers. The parliamentarians reviewed the inadequacy of the existing legislation, suggested British practice as a guide, and cautioned against Victoria making the mistakes of the Old Country; the Bishop warned against the decline in morality that followed upon bad factory conditions, and one employer, a Mr Harper, declared that working employees for more than eight hours each day resulted in <sup>no</sup> loss to the factory owner in the long run. The occasion was a splendid one, but it was productive of no immediate tangible result. The deputation appointed to lay the matter before the Chief Secretary drew from him a statement that he was willing to introduce a new Factory Bill as a Government measure, but the defeat of the Berry Ministry made this impossible.<sup>1</sup>

The M.T.S. continued to campaign. It wrote letters to members of Parliament and to newspapers, it helped prepare draft bills that were never introduced, it set up a Committee to 'watch' the Factory Act, and it exhorted members to vote for those candidates who declared themselves in favour of a satisfactory Act.<sup>2</sup> Other unions, notably the Salesmen and Assistants, kept up campaigns, and in September 1881 Messrs Deakin and Gardiner introduced into the Legislative Assembly a bill for the earlier closing of shops. They accepted a suggestion that the Bill be replaced by a Select Committee, and this in turn became a Royal Commission whose powers of enquiry were subsequently extended

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<sup>1</sup>On the parliamentary background to the Factory Acts of 1873 and 1885 see G. Bartlett 'Political Organization and Society in Victoria' unpublished Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1964.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.XI, no.126, p.124, vol.XIV, no.170, pp.518-9, and vol.XII, no.137, p.210.

to cover all aspects of employment in factories and shops. The Secretary of the Commission then wrote to the Trades Hall Committee, inviting suggestions.

The M.T.S. had affiliated with this body in July 1882.<sup>1</sup> It was a body which had been concerned primarily with the maintenance of the Trades Hall building, and several delegates objected to the formal reception of the Commission's letter on the grounds that the Rules of the Committee did not permit discussion of political questions.<sup>2</sup> The Committee did receive the letter however, and a subsequent Special Meeting from which some delegates withdrew in protest decided to set up a sub-committee 'to draw up suggestions to lay before the Shops Commission, which might be embodied in an Act of Parliament'.<sup>3</sup> In the making of these decisions, Mr R.L. Middleton, of the M.T.S., was prominent.<sup>4</sup>

Closer identification with the trades union movement had not meant any change in the Society's attitude towards the Master Printers. At the same time as the M.T.S. was conducting its campaign for a Factory Act, patient industrial negotiation was bringing it closer to membership of that select group of unions that had achieved the eight-hour day. In the winter of 1882, the Board drew up a scale of charges based on the London scale<sup>5</sup> and the more substantial masters

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XII, no.142, pp.272-3.

<sup>2</sup> A.T.J., vol.XIII, no.152, p.363.

<sup>3</sup> A.T.J., vol.XIII, no.153, pp.370-2.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Middleton represented the Ballarat Typographical Association on the Committee; shortly after the setting up of the sub-committee, the M.T.S. moved its offices to the Trades Hall.

<sup>5</sup> This seems to have been the first attempt of the M.T.S. to codify existing practice. The Board deemed it necessary because so many at the trade by this time had no personal experience of the London scale.

of Melbourne formed themselves into a Master Printers' Association to consider it.<sup>1</sup> After negotiation, 15 employers agreed to work in accordance with the Scale from 1 October. The Scale provided for a small overtime charge, whose object was to encourage employers to employ more men. Hours remained at 50 per week.<sup>2</sup>

Within a month of publishing the Scale, the M.T.S. had begun its campaign for higher wages. Encouraged by the success of the Argus and Age companionships in their negotiations for increased pay, the Society circularized all the master printers of Melbourne with a request for an established minimum of £2.15.0 a week. Negotiations continued with the Master Printers' Association for almost the rest of the year, during which time the M.T.S. advanced its claim to £2.15.0. and a 48 hour week! In November, a Special General Meeting finally accepted the M.P.A.'s offer of £2.12.0 for 48 hours. The grand design of the founders of the V.T.A. 27 years before was at last achieved.<sup>3</sup>

The benign economic climate had helped the amicable conduct of these negotiations. At the first conference of 1883, the Presidents of the M.P.A. and the M.T.S. proposed the success of each other's organization,<sup>4</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup>The Association has maintained continuous existence ever since. Its organizer was Mr Stewart, of McCarron, Bird and Co.

<sup>2</sup>The only printers in Melbourne working an eight-hour day at this time were the employees at the G.P.O., who received 'the boon' a few months earlier.

<sup>3</sup>M.T.S. Minutes, 5 November 1883, Hours on the dailies, which were worked on the piece, remained unlimited, as did those for piece hands in jobbing offices.

<sup>4</sup>A.T.J., vol.XIII, no.150, p.348

representatives of the M.T.S. were careful to point out that their rules provided for settlement of disputes by arbitration and conciliation. They could claim with truth that the Society often acted as a moderating influence. When the Age Chapel threatened a strike in April 1883 a committee of the M.T.S. took over the dispute, and the issue was smoothed over. It thought 'that the threat to strike should only be used in extreme cases'.<sup>1</sup>

The M.T.S. indulged often enough in the practical work of conciliation, but it did not submit any of its disputes to arbitration in this period, nor did it seem to have any clear idea of what it meant by the term. Mr R.L. Middleton, in giving evidence before the Shops Commission, was definite that 'every possible means should be used to avoid strikes, which are alike mischievous to all concerned', and expressed himself in favour of both Courts of Conciliation and Arbitration, with a preference for the latter. His ideal seems to have been a Court to which parties to a dispute could be compulsorily summoned, and the guilty one penalized if there was breach of law or agreement proved. Such a Court would be invaluable in the regulation of boy labour, and enforcement of the Society's apprenticeship ratios. 'We have no law to enforce these regulations', he said. 'I would like to see a law made to put the thing on a proper and fair footing'.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Middleton's view was based on two assumptions; that the Society only demanded what was fair and that the State should interfere on the side of fairness where its

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<sup>1</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 5 May 1883.

<sup>2</sup> A.T.J., vol.XIII, no.155, pp.386-7. What Mr Middleton had in mind was closer to our present Industrial Court.

normal proponent was insufficiently strong. If it was proper for government to regulate industry by means of a Factory Act, then it was proper for it to enforce a trade society's rules where these were adjudged reasonable. From this intervention both employees and the 'fair' employer would benefit.

Since protection was now the settled policy of Victorian governments, it was possible for the M.T.S. to co-operate with master printers in another way. It lobbied for the printing of books for the Government schools within the colony, and after 'nearly two years of persistent agitation by the M.T.S. in favour of a right...inexplicably withheld from the Master Printers of Victoria', G.W. Hall in September 1883 secured Parliament's agreement to the calling for tenders within the colony.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, it fought the battle of the master printers as well as its own by seeking the imposition of a general 25 per cent ad valorem tariff on imported printing matter, and the assessment of the value of stereotype matrices at their composition value.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the M.T.S. in the early eighties held to those principles on which the New Protection legislation of 20 years later was based. Government had a duty to protect native industry, which in turn had a duty to treat fairly with its employees. This could normally be achieved by negotiation, but where this proved impossible, disputes should be settled by a Court whose arbitration was enforceable by process of law. But even as it propounded this doctrine, the M.T.S. was achieving a strength and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.XIII, no.156, p.394. But the Minister reserved the right to reject any tender, and no school books were printed in Victoria for some years to come.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.XII, no.142, p.279 and vol.XIII, no.157, p.402.



self-reliance that led it to change its views.

In January 1881, the M.T.S. had 372 members. In the next five years, its membership almost doubled while the number employed in the printing industry throughout Victoria increased by about a third.<sup>1</sup> This success followed partly as a result of a drive on the compositors and machinists in jobbing offices,<sup>2</sup> but more importantly from a change in policy that recognized a virtual breaking-down of the apprenticeship system. The Board began to admit those at the trade who had no indentures to show, being 'otherwise satisfied' by the production of a certificate to the effect that the bearer had been seven years in the trade. Thus the whole unhappy race of reviled 'improvers' had its chance to join the Society. Equally important, the Board showed a far greater willingness to allow those who had breached the Rules of the Society to join it on payment of fine. Thus those who had served their time in closed offices - and even those who had gone into closed offices - became eligible.<sup>3</sup>

A similar swallowing of craft pride allowed the Society to strengthen its organization by the adoption of an Unemployment Fund. In the winter of 1885, at the first sign that the good times of the previous four years were coming to an end, the A.T.J. began to advocate the establishment of a Fund that would pay a more adequate

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.XVI, no.179, p.600, and Statistical Registers of the Colony of Victoria, 1881 and 1885, part VI. Membership at 30 June 1885 was 660. The number of males employed in 'extensive' printing establishments increased from 2379 in 1881 to 3394 in 1885. I assume that this rate of increase was general throughout the trade.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.XI, no.124, p.107 and vol.XI, no.130, p.157. The Society represented the interests of the jobbing compositors and the machinists by creating a vice-presidential position open only to the former, and a place on the Board open only to the latter.

<sup>3</sup>E.g. M.T.S. Minutes, 8 September 1883, case of Mr Lawson, and A.T.J., vol.XI, no.134, p.189.

sum than the five shillings each half-year allowed by the Rules. It argued that those who contributed to the relief of others were

very materially strengthening their own position. The only legitimate objection that ought to be raised is that in some cases men will be relieved who do not deserve sympathy or consideration, who are almost perpetually out of work, and who care little whether they are employed or not, so long as they can satisfy their selfish appetite for strong drink. It is needless to say we have no sympathy for such men...but...this evil will be far more than counter-balanced by the substantial relief afforded in deserving cases.<sup>1</sup>

These good arguments prevailed, and the Half-Yearly General Meeting in August resolved on an Unemployment Fund that paid 12 shillings a week for a maximum of ten weeks in a year. The same meeting ensured that all members would contribute to the Fund by raising the weekly subscription to sixpence, and provided that no payment would be made to those more than 2/6 in arrears for fines or subscriptions.

Members were well aware of the disciplinary potential of this Fund, and two other benefit schemes the Society concerned itself with in this period were undertaken largely with a view to attracting members and controlling them more closely. The first of these was concerned with a kind of general provident fund that the M.T.S. planned to establish by the proceeds from a grand concert.

The concert was a splendid affair. It began with a prologue specially composed for the occasion by a Society member and read by the President, E.W. (O') Sullivan.

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<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., vol.XVI, no.178, p.588.

There followed a program of music and recitation that included Shamus O'Brien, Robert toi qui j'aime, How We Beat the Favourite, and The Larboard Watch (duet) and a comedietta. After that 'From eleven until two, Terpsichore held sway'.<sup>1</sup> But the patrons had got too much for their money, and the concert netted only \$4.13.6d.

The Society fared better with its Mortality Fund, first put to it in October 1883 by Mr. J.B. Pow, ex-Secretary of the South Australian Typographical Society and a man of some experience in these matters. In proposing the adoption of the Fund, Mr. Pow pointed out the success of similar funds connected with the London Society of Compositors and the Society of Amalgamated Engineers, and concluded

now I will leave it in your hands, hoping that you will give it due considerations and adopt it, as it will not only give the Society some power over its members, but will also be of great value to the families or relations of many members in the future.<sup>2</sup>

As a substitute for the practice of sending round the hat, the scheme was by its very nature compulsory. To make the Fund attractive to the casually employed, who had so far remained largely unorganized, special exemptions from payment were provided for members earning less than thirty shillings a week. The maximum benefit payable was £12, but members could collect only if they were not more than 6s.6d. in arrears. This provision was rigorously enforced.

The Mortality Fund was clearly having a salutary effect on membership by November 1884 when only twelve of a membership of over 500 owed more than a quarter's fees.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.XI, no.127, pp.133-4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.XIII, no.157, p.403, vol.XIV, no.163, p.455.

On a special meeting of 29 November, members assented to a 5 per cent levy on their wages in support of the Bootmakers' Strike. By April 1885 the M.T.S. had paid the Bootmakers £550 - more than double the amount paid by any other Society, its President said - and the levy was only £15.3.6. in arrears. A Special meeting resolved to implement the arrears clause of the Mortality Fund, and expel those who had not completed payment by 14 July.<sup>1</sup>

The boom on which the success of the M.T.S. had largely depended began to slacken in the winter of 1885, when the accumulated effect of a year-long drought began to depress the level of trade. Late in 1886 there was a recovery based on the Broken Hill speculations and a land boom which 'broke out with renewed vehemence'<sup>2</sup> in city and suburbs, and did not falter until 1889. Unemployment among compositors reflected this general pattern. In 1885-6 it was (compared with the years just past) quite heavy, but from the end of 1886 improvement was steady and in the half year ending 30 June 1888, the new unemployment fund cost the Society only £18.<sup>3</sup> The Fund had proved its worth in the previous three years when despite depression (or even because of it), membership increased considerably, 91 new members being admitted in the first half of 1886 alone.

Now that the M.T.S. had reached that point in its organization where some slight falling-off in trade could no longer set it back, it galloped ahead in the years of plenty. By December 1887, membership was above 800; by April 1889, when the boom began to slacken, there were some 1300 men in the Society; and by June 1890, total membership

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol.XV, no.175, pp.561-2.

<sup>2</sup> Coghlan, A History of Capital and Labour... vol.III, p.1691.

<sup>3</sup> A.T.J., vol.XIX, no.215, p.906.

was about 1450. Financial arrangements had been canny enough to result in a proportionately greater increase in funds. The balance sheet for the half year ending 30 June 1889 showed that the Society had handled over £3,300 - half as much again as for the last half of 1887. At this date it had £1500 at fixed deposit, and managed still to have £1050 invested this way as late as 1890, despite an immense increase in expenditure.

Increased membership and financial strength was partly a result of the Society's success in applying the closed shop principle, and as membership and strength increased, so it became easier to insist on the right of unionists to refuse to work with non-unionists. This privilege had been long recognized in the morning dailies<sup>1</sup> but had not applied in the jobbing offices. The tactic used for its extension was the publication of a Fair List. In December 1887 the A.T.J. remarked editorially that so far 'Members have been working among the various offices indiscriminately, and were satisfied so long as the recognized wages were paid and the number of hours observed'; but for an office to be placed on the Fair List, it would have to comply with all the Rules of the Society. The complement to the issue of the Fair List was a vigorous campaign among trade unions and other societies to have their printing done only by 'fair' offices. The original Fair List of December 1887 named 36 offices (including all the major ones) and this number had increased to 50 by February. In all of these offices, the application of the Society's Rules facilitated the recruitment of the remaining non-unionists.

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly on the Age. See A.T.J., November 1911, p.5.

It was at this stage that the M.T.S. set about revising its rules and scale of charges. On 11 June 1888 it met the Master Printers' Association to argue its claims. Discussion very quickly focussed on the Society's wage claims: a minimum wage of £3 (old minimum £2.12.0.) and an increase of a penny in the piece rate to 1/2 a thousand. 'The Conference, after a social glass, separated at 11.40 p.m. inconclusively;<sup>1</sup> but shortly after, Mr. McKinley, a member of the M.P.A., gave his Society hands a fortnight's notice, and announced his intention of employing only non-unionists in the future. The Board called a special meeting of all members, and on 23 June 700 of them - 'the largest meeting of printers ever held in Australia'<sup>2</sup> - packed themselves into the Old Trades Hall. They rejected the offer of £2.16.0. that the M.P.A. had made in the meantime, and resolved that the scale would come into operation on 1 July. On 30 June, a meeting of 800 members heard that the Age and two of the largest jobbing shops (Mason, Firth and McCutcheon and Sands and McDougall) had agreed to their claims. With 'the old home of trades unionism literally ringing with cheers' the meeting resolved:

That the chapels of the different jobbing offices in Melbourne and suburbs be instructed to inquire from their respective employers on Monday 2 July, whether they are willing to pay their 'stab hands £3 for a week of 48 hours, and also the piece hands in their employ 1s.2d. per 1,000 ens, ruby to pica inclusive. In the event of non-compliance with these conditions, the employees are instructed to individually tender a week's notice to quit such employer's service.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., vol.XIX, no.213, pp.883-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.XIX, no.214, p.891.

<sup>3</sup>M.T.S. Minutes of Special Meeting, 30 June 1888.

The Board immediately afterwards fixed strike pay at £2 for married men and 30 shillings for single, and closed Mr McKinley's office. On the first working day, the M.P.A. requested a conference and conceded the claims. By the end of the week, Mr McKinley remained the Society's major worry,<sup>1</sup> but he did not worry it long. Buoyant trade and the M.T.S.'s control of the labour market prevented him from getting more than seven or eight hands, and he accepted the Society's conditions within the month. Even the non-unionists at the Herald had refused to do work for him; and by the end of the year they, too, were Society members, every single one of them, and the Herald proprietors had agreed to work their paper in accordance with M.T.S. Rules for the first time in fourteen years.<sup>2</sup> By November 1888 the M.T.S. had reached its height of influence, and the Intercolonial Typographical Conference that it held in that month was a tribute to its prestige among the other Societies.

By this time it was carrying the campaign against boy labour into the country. In December, negotiation with the management resulted in the opening of the Bendigo Advertiser, closed to members of the M.T.S. since 1879 on account of its employment of boys. The management agreed to recognize the Rules; the M.T.S. delegates, George Jordan and John Hancock agreed to recognize a shilling a thousand as a fair price. They set up a branch on that basis, and arrived in Melbourne 'with the cheer which was given on the starting of the train

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<sup>1</sup>One other office had refused to recognize the Society's minimum rates. This was the Salvation Army's War Cry office, which was not conducted entirely on commercial principles. A separate arrangement was made, and the War Cry office subsequently became a Society stronghold.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.XIX, no.220, p.957.

...still ringing in (their) ears.<sup>1</sup> When the other daily, the Independent, refused to come to terms with the branch over the employment of boys and the inclusion of a Melbourne-produced supplement, the new branch closed the office, and with the aid of local unions, organised a boycott. Altogether 30 trades joined in, and the proprietor was forced to yield within a couple of months.<sup>2</sup>

With this success in sight, the M.T.S. was even bold enough to attempt to establish a branch in Geelong, the graveyard of half a dozen typographical societies. It succeeded in persuading one of the dailies to work according to Rules, but it had little success elsewhere, and when the President threw in his lot with the proprietors, the struggling branch collapsed.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear though that the M.T.S. regarded this as no more than a temporary set-back, and remained confident in its own strength and the strength of its brother unions. Its attitude had gradually hardened against conciliation and arbitration by outside bodies, since July 1887, when a proposition for joining the Board of Conciliation was first put to it. This was a body to be formed from equal representatives of the Trades Hall Council and the Victorian Employers Union, and the A.T.J. at first showed mild

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.XX, no.221, p.968.

John Hancock (1846-99): Born London; newspaper compositor; arrived Melbourne, 1883(?); Secretary, M.T.S., 1889-99; M.L.A. Collingwood, 1891-2; M.L.A. Footscray, 1894-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol.XX, no.224, p.999. Bendigo became a separate society in August 1889 and remained so until July 1900 when it again became a branch of the M.T.S.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vol.XX, no.230, p.1062.



interest. Six months later, the Board rejected the proposition, and by the end of 1888 it was voting money for the support of those who were on strike against an attempt by their employers to force them into signing the Rules of the Board.<sup>1</sup> John Hancock neatly summed the views of the Society when he said, in speaking of the Society's success in obtaining the £3 minimum:

employers had (not) given way because they considered the members were entitled to the increase asked for. They had given way because of the excellent organization of the Society... it was only by combination that they could retain in the future the benefits of which they were already in possession.<sup>2</sup>

A few months later, when the Society was in a winning position at Bendigo, the A.T.J. replied to a suggestion that the matter be referred to arbitration: 'There are certain questions in the matter that cannot be arbitrated upon.'<sup>3</sup>

This confidence in the Society's industrial self-sufficiency led it to take the question of amalgamation with kindred crafts very lightly. After the McKinley strike, it got as far as joining up a good many pressmen and machinists in jobbing offices, but it could not bring itself to seek the membership of those men who tended the huge rotary machines in the dailies and who as technical parvenus had no attachment to any particular craft.<sup>4</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vo.XIX, no.220, p.956.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol.XX, no.219, p.950.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol.XX, no.223, p.989.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol.XIX, no.207, p.832, and M.T.S. Minutes, 11 August 1888. The committee members were all jobbing office men.

took the same view of stereotypers, who, despairing of M.T.S. membership, formed their own union in September 1889.<sup>1</sup> A little earlier the Bookbinders, a society of some years' standing, had unsuccessfully submitted a request for affiliation or federation.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, it was partly through confidence in its own strength that the M.T.S. did not develop its interest in parliamentary politics. In November 1886 the A.T.J. announced that boy labour was as prevalent as ever, and concluded that 'either the provisions of the statute are not strictly enforced or the Act has failed in one of its vital principles.' But in the prosperity of 1887 there followed no campaign for amendment of the Act along the lines that the M.T.S. had conducted a few years earlier.<sup>3</sup> Instead the M.T.S. set about attaining through the organization of the closed shop and country branches that control over boy labour that it once hoped the Factory Act would have achieved.

The industrial success of the M.T.S. discouraged interest in the direct representation of labour in Parliament. Late in 1885, three Trades Hall leaders Messrs Murphy, Trenwith and Bromley, joined forces with ten discontented liberals in nominating for the approaching elections as representatives of the National Liberal League.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol.XX, no.230, p.1063.

<sup>2</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 27 April 1889.

<sup>3</sup> The only references to the Factory Act from 1886 to the end of the decade are a few minor ones concerned with industrial health.

<sup>4</sup> On relations between the Trades Hall and the Liberal Party at this time see S.M. Ingham, 'Some Aspects of Victorian Liberalism, 1880-1900' unpublished M.A. thesis, Melbourne 1949.

In reviewing the debate in Trades Hall Council on parliamentary representation of labour, the A.T.J. took the same view as the Age:

it is held by many thinking working men that in this democratic country, where payment of members and manhood suffrage prevail, and where the majority of representatives are but slightly removed from the bona fide working man, this direct representation is almost, if not quite, unnecessary.<sup>1</sup>

There was very likely another reason for this. In July 1880, G.W. Hall, ex-Secretary of the M.T.S., was elected to the Legislative Assembly. Through him the Society established contact with a group of radical parliamentarians who took a keen interest in the proceedings of the Factories and Shops Commission, and the passage of the Act that followed its Report.<sup>2</sup> In the next few years the Society made Ministerial representations on newspaper postage, the printing of school books in the colony, and the tariff; presumably the Society found its parliamentary friends helpful in these matters. Most of them depended for their seats on working men's votes. The Board of Management might well have considered it imprudent to disturb a useful alliance by promoting the rise of a party based entirely on 'the labour interest'.

But there was a minority who believed that the direct parliamentary representation of the labour movement was necessary and one of these in 1889 was the newly-elected Secretary, John Hancock. When the best efforts of the

<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., vol.XVI, no.182, p.624.

<sup>2</sup>Hall spoke at the mass meeting that inaugurated the M.T.S.'s campaign for an improved Factory Act in September 1880. He subsequently introduced the Society's deputation to the Chief Secretary, and was appointed to the Shops Commission in 1882.

Society and the Master Printers failed to produce any worthwhile increase in the tariff on imported printed matter, Hancock wrote:

Printers must get out of the 'after me the Deluge' style, and use all the means they have at their disposal to remedy these abuses that are sapping the life's blood of the trade.<sup>1</sup>

But the Deluge did not come until a year later, and up until the time it was actually breaking Hancock had succeeded in inducing the M.T.S. to take only one step to practical assistance to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Hall Council - the donation of a guinea in August 1890.<sup>2</sup>

Ironically, the very strength of the M.T.S. held back its further political development. In the first five years of the decade, it had established itself as a guide and model for the trade union movement. It had relaxed the narrow craft standards that it had formerly required for entry, it had been powerful in broadening the policies of the Trades Hall Council, and it had adopted a system of well-planned benefit schemes that had helped it close printing offices to non-union labour. From 1880 to 1885, it had become increasingly involved in the problems of workers who were not printers, and had established a connection with radical parliamentarians. But its successes promoted an exaggerated idea of its own self-sufficiency that deterred it from fully exploiting its trade union alliances. It lost interest in joining to it those sections of the printing industry still outside its ranks, and neglected further political action in pursuit of an improved

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<sup>1</sup> *A.T.J.*, vol.20, no.229, p.1054. (Italics mine)

<sup>2</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 16 August 1890.

Factory Act that would have brought it into contact with un-organized workers in other industries; and it felt no need for a plan of action to advance the cause of the labour movement as a whole by its specific and direct representation in parliament.

### The New South Wales Typographical Association

The organization of compositors in Sydney had begun about fifteen years before the beginning of the period covered by this thesis.<sup>1</sup> Between 1850 and 1880, there seem to have been at least three successive typographical societies. None of their records survive, but it is possible to piece together some outline of their activities from other sources.<sup>2</sup>

The outline is thinnest for the first. A typographical society definitely existed in Sydney in 1852.<sup>3</sup> By October, it had disappeared.<sup>4</sup> Practically no other details can be found.<sup>5</sup>

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For an account of the Sydney Compositors' Society, 1835-44, see Leila Thomas, 'The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of N.S.W.', M.A. Thesis, published by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1962.

2

Principally, the following were used:

The Empire

The Sydney Morning Herald

The Australian Typographical Circular

The Australasian Typographical Journal

The Minutes of the Sydney Morning Herald Chapel

3

The first newspaper reference to a typographical society in Sydney seems to be an advertisement in the S.M.H. for 2 July 1852, which gives notice of a half-yearly general meeting on 10 July.

4

In October 1853, the S.M.H. Chapel had to summon representatives of other offices individually to discuss a wage rise they proposed to seek.

5

An article in A.T.J., vol. XXVII, no. 323, p. 2 (May 1897) refers to a society being established in Sydney in 'the latter end of 1851' and quotes some lines from its Rule Book. The use of the word 'hitherto' in the quotation and the anonymous author's later chronological confusion suggests that this Rule Book may well belong to a later Society. J.T. Sutcliffe however repeats the A.T.J.'s version in his History of Trade Unionism in Australia, p. 19.

A little more is known of the second. It seems to have originated as a result of two incidents in the trade in 1854. The first of these was a dispute at the Empire which resulted in 17 compositors being tried for conspiracy;<sup>1</sup> and all were convicted.<sup>2</sup> Three months later, the Government Printer dismissed the members of a deputation that had approached him for an increase in wages.<sup>3</sup> Compositors in at least one other office took up a subscription for the dismissed men,<sup>4</sup> and a meeting of journeymen printers passed a motion which asserted the 'most sacred right' of workmen to meet together 'in order to arrange the price at which they will dispose of their labour,' placed a ban on positions at the Government Printing Office, and set up a committee 'to defray the loss of the men who have left their employment'.<sup>5</sup> Within three months, an organization known as the New South Wales Typographical Association was issuing its members with cards.<sup>6</sup>

In February 1855, the new Association was considerably strengthened when 30 of the 35 members of the Sydney Morning Herald Chapel decided to join it.<sup>7</sup> A year later the same Chapel decided that all its Chapel officers must be members of the Association<sup>8</sup>; but a year

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<sup>1</sup> Empire, 11 and 16 January, 11 and 15 February 1854.

<sup>2</sup> Empire, 15 February 1854. They were sentenced for terms ranging from one day to six weeks.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 1 June 1854.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 30 May 1854.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 14 June 1854.

<sup>6</sup> S.M.H., 6 October 1854.

<sup>7</sup> S.M.H. Chapel Minutes, 6 February 1855.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 6 February 1856.

later again, the Chapel did not even bother to elect its Association delegates at its Annual General Meeting.<sup>1</sup> By May 1858, <sup>The Association</sup> ~~the~~ was, on the admission of its secretary, 'composed of few in number, and in some respects weak and powerless';<sup>2</sup> nonetheless, it resolved to do what it could in assisting the companionship at the Empire (apparently not members) who left their work collectively in that month.<sup>3</sup> The Empire affair seems to have been the death of both the paper and the Association.<sup>4</sup>

There was no typographical society in Sydney until about October 1868, when another N.S.W. Typographical Association was established.<sup>5</sup>

The new Association had to establish itself in a trade that recognized no minimum rate for compositors.<sup>6</sup> Some offices paid as little as 8d. a thousand ens to journeymen;<sup>7</sup> there was no established apprenticeship convention, and turnovers and 'mere infants'<sup>8</sup> set a thousand ens for as little as 4d. Except for the year 1872, the years 1869 to 1874 were years of heavy unemployment for compositors.<sup>9</sup> The Association remained weak and uninfluential.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., February 1857.

<sup>2</sup> A.T.C., May 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., January 1859.

<sup>5</sup> The S.M.H. did not mention the foundation of the Association, but briefly reported its first anniversary dinner on 2 November 1869.

<sup>6</sup> A.T.J., Vol.I, no.11, pp.76 and 83.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Vol.II, no.16, p.26.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Vol.III, no.38, p.82, and Vol.IV, no.50, p.92.

<sup>9</sup> The evidence of the trade reports in the A.T.J. squares generally with Coghlan's account.

<sup>10</sup> A.T.J., Vol.I, no.4, p.27, Vol.II, no.16, p.26, Vol.II, no.23, p.76.

The printing industry began to grow brisker in 1874, and recovery continued into 1875. The Association succeeded in negotiating an agreement with the master printers which raised the minimum rate to 1s.1d. for a thousand ens,<sup>1</sup> and it sought further agreement to regulate the entry of boys into the trade by requiring that all apprentices be bound, and that their number did not exceed a general ratio of one apprentice to three journeymen in jobbing offices.<sup>2</sup> The masters refused, and when the members of the Association threatened to strike, they replaced them with compositors recruited in Melbourne.<sup>3</sup> After a while, even some of the 'foremost' members of the Association ratted;<sup>4</sup> the strike collapsed, and the Association disintegrated.<sup>5</sup>

The first N.S.W. Typographical Association whose records have survived was founded early in 1880 at the beginning of a long period of trade prosperity. A new morning daily, the Sydney Daily Telegraph<sup>6</sup>, had been founded on 1 July 1879, and was now firmly established. The Sydney Morning Herald expanded its size to produce a fairly regular 16 pages during sessions of parliament in 1881, and the Evening News added to the number of its frames about the same time. The A.T.J.'s Sydney correspondent noted the birth of several newweeklies<sup>7</sup> in March 1880, and he was able to continue to report brisk trade until well into 1884, long after other trades had met fairly heavy unemployment. Moreover, the Association in its early years was served by some capable men, among whom

<sup>1</sup> Set at night. The day rate was 1s.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol.V, no.55, p.36.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol.V, no.60, p.73.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Vol.V, no.63, p.83.

<sup>5</sup> No reports from the Association correspondent appeared in the A.T.J. after the failure of the strike. Eighteen months later a new correspondent wrote that the N.S.W.T.A. was defunct; see A.T.J., vol.VII, no.86, p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Re-named the Telegraph in 1883.

<sup>7</sup> One of these was the famous Bulletin.



were G.M. Prendergast and E.W. O'Sullivan.<sup>1</sup>

In these first few years of its development, the N.S.W.T.A. was conservative in policy, and cautious in method. Its aims in practice were the maintenance of rates already paid by the larger employers, and the conservation of the privileges of the craft. Thus it sent deputations to the Sydney Daily Telegraph and the Echo to seek a reduction in the number of boys employed, and in each case was generally successful. Quite early in its history it managed its first strike, although some time was to pass before it would initiate one. When the companionship at the Words of Grace office turned out over the introduction of four girls as compositors, the N.S.W.T.A. supported the men, and negotiated with the employers. The girls were withdrawn.<sup>2</sup>

But most of the time, gentle measures prevailed, 'the object of the Board always being to conciliate matters

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<sup>1</sup>George Michael Prendergast (1854-1937): born Adelaide, apprenticed at Stawell; one of the founders of the Association; elected to the Board of Management in April 1880; Secretary, 1881; after a period as manager of the Narrandera Argus, went to Melbourne; first secretary of the Victorian Labor Party, 1892; M.L.A. North Melbourne, 1894-97, and 1900-27; Chief Secretary 1913 and 1927; Premier 1924; M.L.A. Footscray, 1927-37. Edward William O'Sullivan (1846-1910): born Launceston; learned trade, Hobart Mercury; in 1874 moved to Melbourne, and shortly after became editor of the St Arnaud Mercury, joined Melbourne Argus, 1879; President, Melbourne Typographical Society, 1881; overseer, Sydney Daily Telegraph, 1882; President, N.S.W.T.A. and delegate to Trades and Labour Council, 1882; President, Trades and Labour Council, 1883; M.L.A., Queanbeyan, 1885-1904; Secretary for Public Works, 1899-1904; Secretary for Lands, 1904; M.L.A. Belmore, 1904-10.

<sup>2</sup>N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 16 October 1880.

where possible.<sup>1</sup> The Association registered under the Trade Union Act of 1881, which offered its funds protection and set about building up its membership, with the aim of increasing its bargaining power through closing the larger establishments to all but unionists.<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, it did not insist on an indenture as a necessary qualification for entry, being quite prepared to accept those who 'could otherwise satisfy the Board of Management' by producing some document to show that they had served five years at the trade.

Despite this liberal policy, membership did not grow rapidly, and some of the largest firms remained beyond the influence of the Association. At the Sydney Morning Herald there was a large and well-organized Chapel that had functioned continuously since 1846, and enjoyed superior working conditions. Its Father joined as an individual, but could not bring his Chapel with him, and it was more than a year before more than a handful of Sydney Morning Herald employees were on the roll. There was a similar problem at John Sands, where the proprietor also took a paternal attitude towards his employees. With the Government Printing Office, the Association had much the same trouble as the M.T.S. and it did not manage to make any real headway there until the Government Printer sanctioned preference in employment to Association compositors about the end of 1886. Thus outside two of the dailies and some of the larger jobbing offices where the Chapel was the most important bargainer with the management in any case, the N.S.W.T.A.

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XIII, no.150, p.350.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol.XIII, no.152, p.366

had little or no influence, and it was in no position to accede to requests from Newcastle, Wagga, and Maitland for assistance in the establishment of branches.

It did, however, consider that it had obligations other than the maintenance of well-being among Sydney's more prosperous compositors. The very first Board meeting decided on affiliation with the Trades and Labour Council, and in March 1883, E.W. O'Sullivan, N.S.W.T.A. delegate, was elected President of the Council. Partly through O'Sullivan's energy, the majority of the N.S.W.T.A.'s members supported donations called for by other trade unions in trouble. Thus in November 1883, the Quarterly General Meeting voted £15 to the Butchers' Association, whose members were on strike for a 48 hours week, despite the fact that (as the Sydney correspondent of the A.T.J. pointed out), the Rules prevented the expenditure of funds except for 'upholding the interests of the Association.'<sup>1</sup> A few months later, the Coopers were voted £10 for a similar purpose, the President remarking that 'although we had not the eight hours ourselves, we were still bound to support them.'<sup>2</sup>

But involvement in the affairs of other unions and the business of the Trades and Labour Council had its problems, and representation even by so able a person as O'Sullivan was a mixed blessing. O'Sullivan was an energetic Protectionist. In N.S.W., where industrialization had proceeded at a slower rate than in Victoria and land sales had provided the government with a large revenue far longer than in the other colony, the Free Trade-Protection controversy was still a lively political issue. Free trade policies had not become so clearly aligned with Legislative Council and landholding interest, there had been no David

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol.XIV, no.159, p.423.

<sup>2</sup> N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 8 March 1884.

Syme and no Age, and radicalism had not identified itself so clearly with the Protectionist group. Parliamentarians of all factions sought the vote of the working classes, and workmen were divided in their allegiance. Hence O'Sullivan's attempts to ally the Trades and Labour Council more closely with the Protectionist cause had repercussions within the N.S.W.T.A., and at least one attempt was made to unseat him from its Board of Management.<sup>1</sup>

The Association was therefore determined to keep out of politics. It did not develop any interest like that of the M.T.S. in a Factory Act, and preferred to deal with politicians as administrators rather than as parliamentarians. Its only contact with them up to 1884 was by way of deputation over matters in the Government Printing Office, and the printing of school books in the colony.<sup>2</sup>

The spring of 1884 marked an important change in the policy of the N.S.W.T.A. Until that time, it had been content to allow the work of industrial negotiation to be carried on by individual Chapels. Now it determined to bargain collectively. After a series of meetings on the revision of rules that extended over a year, it finally adopted rules that established for its members (among other things) an eight hour day and a minimum wage of £3 a week

<sup>1</sup>On O'Sullivan's Protectionist activities in the eighties see A.W. Martin, 'The Emergence of Political Parties in N.S.W. during the 1880s', Typescript, Menzies Library, A.N.U.; and B.E. Mansfield, 'E.W. O'Sullivan, 1846-1910: The Pattern of a Political Career', in R.A.H.S. Journal and Proceedings, vol.50, part v, and Australian Democrat, Sydney, 1965, chapter II. On his activities in the Trades and Labour Council, see N.B. Nairn, 'The Role of the Trades and Labour Council in N.S.W., 1871-91', in Historical Studies, vol.7, no.28.

<sup>2</sup>N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 27 February 1884 and 22 April 1882.

in jobbing offices. It then staked a claim for the recognition of its right to bargain on behalf of all compositors by inviting the master printers of Sydney to a conference to be held on 15 September 1884, in the Society's rooms.<sup>1</sup>

Eight employers attended, and there was one apology. The outcome of the meeting was simply that the masters determined to have meetings among themselves. Most of them were quite willing to concede 48 hours ('a mere bagatelle', Mr Batson called it), but they jibbed at £3 per week. Time and the season were on their side. As seasonal unemployment increased, and no agreement was reached, members decided by ballot to reduce their claim to £2.15.0, and announced that the new rules would operate from 1 July 1885. There was a slow acceptance by jobbing office employers, and under threat of strike from the Board, 15 firms had agreed to the new rules by the end of July.<sup>2</sup> A conference with newspaper employers in May had resulted largely in acceptance of the new rules and confirmed the right of the companionship to set the whole paper.<sup>3</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald stood aloof from these negotiations, its proprietor, James Fairfax, reiterating

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<sup>1</sup>This was probably the second meeting of master printers and a printing union held in Sydney. The old N.S.W.T.A. had previously succeeded in holding one in 1875, and had obtained a signed agreement. See A.T.J., vol.5, no.55, p.36.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.XVI, no.178, p.591.

<sup>3</sup>In this case there was an agreement on payment for blocks not made by the companionship - an important item of 'fat' that was later the occasion of the Register strike in Adelaide. A.T.J., vol.XVI, no.176, p.574.

that he would deal with his Chapel only - and the Herald remained an open shop.<sup>1</sup>

There were still plenty of other open shops of less importance in Sydney's jobbing trade, and it is a measure of the Association's success that it succeeded in more than doubling the number of offices that worked in conformity with the Rules during the next two years, despite the degree of unemployment that persisted in the printing trade (as in others) from the autumn of 1886 to the spring of 1887. Much of the credit for this belongs to Richard Gough, who was appointed as the Association's first paid permanent Secretary in July 1885, and to his successor, W.G. Higgs.<sup>1</sup>

Although Gough and Higgs administered the Rules with a fine admixture of tolerance in times of unemployment, the Association gained steadily in strength. In April 1887, a dispute over a price reduction at the Evening News developed into a dispute over the right of the proprietor to employ non-union labour. With the help of the Trades and Labour Council, the Association won.<sup>2</sup> By August, the Association listed 34 offices on its Fair List, and closed 20 to its members. In December it assisted in the foundation of a second country society at Goulburn, during a visit to

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<sup>1</sup> William Guy Higgs; Born Wingham, 1862; appointed Secretary, N.S.W.T.A., 18 September 1886; delegate to Trade and Labour Council, 9 July 1887; co-proprietor Trade and Labour Advocate, August 1889; M.L.A., Fortitude Valley, 1899-1901; Senator representing Queensland, 1901-06; M.H.R. Capricornia, 1910; Federal Treasurer, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Even after its President by personal intervention frustrated a Board of Management direction to the Chapel to strike.

Goulburn by its President, J.D. Fitzgerald,<sup>1</sup> with the Evening News cricket team.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 1887, those few who had vaunted their non-unionism in the Evening News strike were eager to rejoin the Association, even under penalty of heavy fine. Next month, the Association took the lesson of the strike-breakers on the Evening News to heart, and amended the Rules to provide for an Unemployment Fund in place of discretionary relief. The same meeting approved of a Mortality Fund being put to a ballot which subsequently carried the proposal.

Meanwhile, as the Association was gaining experience and strength in industrial negotiation, it was painfully re-defining its attitude towards the labour movement. From 1884 to 1888 there was deep division among members not only over free trade and protection politics, but over the Association's relationship with other trade unions and the specific representation of the labour interest in Parliament. There was an interesting wrangle over the sending of delegates to the 1885 Intercolonial Trade Union Conference, whose agenda included a thinly veiled item on

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<sup>1</sup> John Daniel Fitzgerald (1862-1922); born Shellharbour; Father, Evening News 1886; President, N.S.W.T.A. 1887-88; Vice President, Trades and Labour Council; M.L.A., West Sydney, 1891; called to Bar, 1900; President Labour League, 1901; M.L.C., 1915-22; Minister for Public Health, 1916-19; Minister for Local Government, 1919-20; Minister for Justice, 1920.

<sup>2</sup>

After persistent requests, in the winter of 1885, the President, Mr J.F. Ellis, had visited Newcastle and helped establish a society there.

Protection.<sup>1</sup>

The first Intercolonial Trade Union Congress had been held in 1879, before the foundation of the Association; to the second, held in Melbourne in 1884, the Association had, after a little discussion resolved to send no delegate. But a General Meeting of 18 April 1885 decided that it should be represented at the next. This decision was challenged in August. Mr. J.H. Abbott, delegate to the Trades and Labour Council, asked

What had we, as members of a Typographical Association, to do with political matters such as 'Payment of Members', 'enfranchisement of seamen,' 'Enforcement of labour clauses in mining leases,'... 'amendment of the labour laws' and so forth. As printers we were left out in the cold. He would certainly oppose the wasting of our funds for such political purposes.

Mr Greene did not wish 'to throw away £15 or £16 on a cause that could do us no earthly good,' and the President, Mr. J.F. Ellis, confessed 'that he could not see a redeeming feature in the programme before him,' but 'He would leave the matter in the hands of the meeting.'<sup>2</sup>

The meeting consigned the question to a Special Meeting to be held a week later. Here those who supported sending delegates to the Congress made a better showing.

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<sup>1</sup>Encouragement of Native Industry. The other items to be discussed were: Payment of members of parliament, nationalisation of land, federation of labour in Australia, abolition of state-assisted migration, restriction of Chinese and Coolie immigration, enfranchisement of seamen, better inspection of mines, Factories and Workshops Act, and land boiler inspection.

<sup>2</sup>N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 29 August 1885.



Mr Paul Long said that

State assisted immigration was one of the greatest evils the colony of N.S.W. had to contend with, and no trade more so than printing. Compositors had been known to come out to Queensland and Sydney as cow boys and farm labourers. Such an unjust law should be amended. Again the Factories Act would be the means of preventing boys from working after hours at printing.

These arguments did not prevail; the meeting decided to rescind the resolution to send delegates by eleven votes to seven.

But this was not the end of the matter. Three weeks later the President announced to the Board that he had received a requisition signed by 107 members to call another meeting on representation. He did not intend to pander to a minority, he said, and the Board supported him. None the less, he did call the meeting, and it decided to send a delegate - the President - by 37 votes to 17.

The President went, and the Congress converted him. In his report he said

the great success of the late Congress lays (sic), not in any immediate result the settlement of the various questions discussed will have, but in the fact of the representatives of some 20,000 trades unionists meeting together with one common object in view - the desire to assist one another. It is an undoubted proof of the vast good such associations as ours are doing in a country like this where the great bulk of the population are working men and women, and where, hitherto, the capitalists have been fattening on the ill-paid energies of the down-trodden workmen. And on this ground alone I feel proud that the Typographical Association allied itself to a movement which must, if it has not already, become a lasting power in this country. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 31 October 1885

The Association was represented at all subsequent Trade Union Congresses.

This account of decisions taken and rescinded is paralleled by the story of the Association's attitude towards the Eight Hour Demonstration and the purchase of a banner.<sup>1</sup> The outcome is the same; after the arguments, the Association strengthened its links with the labour movement.

There was one important qualification to its attitude. In 1885-6, E.W. O'Sullivan succeeded in engineering a closer alliance between the Trades and Labour Council and the Protectionist cause, now heightened in its importance by the crisis in government finances and the passage of a bill introduced by the Jennings ministry for a small customs tariff. In December 1886, J.V. Wiley, President of the Trades and Labour Council, addressed a Protectionist rally in the Domain. In January, the N.S.W.T.A., which had religiously refused correspondence with any Protectionist organization throughout 1886,<sup>2</sup> considered a notice of motion at its Annual General Meeting for the censure of the Trades and Labour Council for 'allowing the matter of protection to be introduced into its meetings.' The meeting substituted the word 'politics' and carried the motion. It was one thing to feel closer identification with the trade union movement; it was another to meddle in party politics. In these a scrupulous neutrality had to be maintained.

But the same meeting that censured the Trades and Labour Council passed a motion that foreshadowed some liberalizing of the Association's attitude towards

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 8 August 1885, 14 May 1887, 23 May 1887.

<sup>2</sup>See Ibid., 6 March, 12 October and 27 November 1886.

Parliamentary politics. J.F. Ellis, in his Report on the Intercolonial Trade Union Congress of 1885, had expressed particular interest in the possibility of a Factory Act.

The General Meeting of 29 January 1887 resolved

That two gentlemen be appointed by the society to obtain information and report to a special meeting concerning the Factories Act, with a view of offering suggestions to Dr Renwick (late Minister of Education) or any other gentleman who may take up the bill.

This is the first recorded instance of an attempt by the Association to influence legislation, and it was prepared to go no further than parliamentary lobbying. It was not until January 1888 that the Association took interest in a second piece of legislation - Mr Schey's Eight Hour Bill<sup>1</sup> - but again its dealings were cautious.

By this time, the Association was moving close to a bolder policy in its relations with the Master Printers, by now organized into a permanent body which by the end of 1888 represented 45 out of the 71 printing firms in Sydney.<sup>2</sup> In anticipation of a collective bargain more comprehensive than that of 1884, the Association began revision of its Rules, and in so doing raised its minimum wage to £3 per week. The General Meeting of 10 November 1888 resolved that the new Rules would come into force on New Year's Day, and that the masters be given until 1 December to reply.

The Master Printers' Association replied that it considered the time 'most inopportune' for an increase in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2 February 1888. The meeting resolved to assist the Trades and Labour Council financially in its support of the Bill.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 8 December 1887. The organization arose out of the Association's revisions of its Fair List. The Sydney Morning Herald was not a member, but the other dailies were.

the minimum wage to £3, protested that some of the other Rules would cause 'perpetual warfare', and offered a conference. The Executive of the Association delayed an answer to the M.P.A., negotiated privately with some of the employers, issued its members with forms giving a fortnight's notice, advertised strike pay at ordinary working rates, and offered to same to the unemployed. Then the General Meeting refused the M.P.A. a conference, and threatened a fortnight's notice by all hands if the claims were not met. The masters conceded the £3, and requested a conference on some of the details. The N.S.W.T.A. accepted the offer.

The events are interesting, for more than one reason. First, they demonstrate the greatly increased power of the Association. The Christmas season of 1888 was not a particularly good one, and there were some unemployed,<sup>1</sup> yet the Master Printers were not able to turn this to their advantage. Second, they make an interesting comment on the Association's attitude to arbitration. From the first, the Rules had proclaimed willingness to settle disputes 'amicably...by conference, or by arbitration,' but it was not until their revision in 1888 that they elaborated the point. In the same Rules that were put to the masters with the ultimatum for their acceptance was an ironic three-clause section on the reference of disputes to an Arbitration Committee.

After this flexing of its muscles, the Association was strong enough to hold its own despite the oversupply of compositors following on the failure of the Brisbane printing

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<sup>1</sup> There is not much room for doubt about this. There would seem to be little point in falsifying trade reports in the A.T.J. in an attempt to deceive master printers who were daily engaged in the business of hiring labour.

strike. In fact, it grew still stronger. Against the collapse of the Goulburn Branch it could set the establishment of another at Bathurst.<sup>1</sup> In February 1890, as the Association's membership climbed well above half of all the compositors employed in Sydney, the General Meeting finally passed a motion that had been coming up for years - that in fair offices, no man was to start work unless he could satisfy the Father of the Chapel that he was a financial member of the N.S.W.T.A. Six months later, the Association passed a motion penalizing those who neglected to join within three months; in the meantime, it had successfully dealt with attempts to introduce non-union labour at the Bathurst Advocate and the Newcastle Star; and conducted a small strike to enforce the Association's apprentice ratio at the Sydney Printing and Stationery Co.<sup>2</sup>

As the Association grew stronger, so its attitude towards fellow craftsmen relaxed. In 1886, the machinists, stereotypers and machine feeders of Sydney - all unindentured men - formed themselves into a Society, and in February 1887 applied for admission into the N.S.W.T.A. as a Branch. The Board rejected their request outright. In June 1889, the Pressmen and Stereotypers' Union requested federation with the N.S.W.T.A. on the grounds that 'the federation of capitalists (was) becoming stronger and more complete each day.' The Board offered a conference.

Similarly, the Association changed its attitude towards affiliation with the Australasian Typographical Union. The A.T.U. had repeatedly requested the N.S.W.T.A.

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<sup>1</sup>N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 30 November 1889.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.21, nos.238, 239 and 240, pp.2029, 2037 and 2044.

to join it ever since 1880, but the N.S.W.T.A. had never shown any interest. Its reasons are not clear, but it is possible to make a guess at them from the motion moved by J.C. Watson at the General Meeting of 8 February 1890.<sup>1</sup>

Watson's motion proposed affiliation on conditions that indicate a jealousy of local funds and a suspicion that the A.T.U. was under the thumb of the Melbourne Typographical Society. But a proposition for joining unconditionally was put to members by ballot, and carried by 299 votes to 186.<sup>2</sup>

There were limits however to this broader view that members were taking of their craft. Occasionally through the eighties the problem of women working as compositors in Sydney had worried the Association, since the occasion of the first strike at the Words of Grace office in 1880.<sup>3</sup> But in 1889 the problem had arisen in larger proportions (and with considerably more publicity) at the office of The Dawn, a newspaper conducted by Mrs Lawson in the interests of female emancipation. The Association insisted

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<sup>1</sup> John Christian Watson (1867-1941): Born Valparaiso; apprenticed North Otago Times; arrived in Australia, 1886; joined the Australian Star; delegate to Trades and Labour Council 1890; elected President, T. & L.C. 1893; M.L.A. for Young, 1894-1901; M.H.R. for Bland; Prime Minister, 1904; resigned leadership of the Labour Party, 1907; retired from Parliament, 1910; expelled from the Labour Party over the conscription issue, 1916; later President, N.R.M.A. N.G. Butlin, in 'Collective Bargaining in the Sydney Printing Industry, 1880-1894', is in error in naming him as Secretary of the N.S.W.T.A.

<sup>2</sup> N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 8 March 1890.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. at the Evening News in 1887

that it was no opponent of the avowed aims of The Dawn, but it questioned whether the emancipation of women would be effected by paying them one third of a fair male wage for equivalent work.<sup>1</sup> Its real fear of course was the prospect of serious competition from women compositors prepared to work at well below Association rates, and for a while this seemed a serious possibility as compositors from New Zealand migrated to Sydney, and at least one Sydney firm took them on.<sup>2</sup>

The Association was compelled to take some official notice of the problem by a certain Miss Hill, who kept on applying for membership. At the General Meeting of 26 July 1890, J.D. Fitzgerald moved that such alteration of the Rules be made

as will allow the admission of female compositors, who may be duly qualified, and may agree to claim equal rates of pay for equal hours of labour with men.

When the motion was put to the meeting it won only four votes. Its significance is not its defeat but its presence; in 1880, in the Words of Grace dispute, no one even considered the possibility of admitting women under any circumstances. Even such apparently slight progress was remarkable.

As the Association took a more tolerant view of its fellow craft members, so it broadened its view of relations with the labour movement as a whole. Late in 1887, there had been some dispute over the donation of money by the Association to the Bulli Prosecution Fund, which aimed at

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<sup>1</sup>AT.J., vol.XX, no.226, p.1024.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.XX, no.228, p.1040

assisting the miners and their dependants to test the application of the Employers' Liability Act to their case. To meet the objection that such expenditure was not relevant to upholding the interests of the Association, the Board in June 1888 amended Rule 9 to allow expenditure of money '...for any purpose affecting the interest of trade unionism which the Board may determine.'

The Board interpreted this charter broadly and from the winter of 1888 the N.S.W.T.A. became increasingly concerned in the affairs of the labour movement. It sent delegates to the Anti-Chinese League, and participated in their demonstrations; signed a petition seeking the mitigation of sentences passed on the Brookong shearers; donated money for the defence of the proprietors of the Trades and Labour Advocate in a libel action; donated £100 to the London Dockers, and turned out in a demonstration on their behalf; sent representatives to a conference for establishing a workmen's newspaper, and guaranteed to take 600 copies for six months.

Meanwhile its relations with the Trades and Labour Council steadily improved. In January 1888 the last of what had looked like becoming an annual series of secession motions received only two votes. In October 1889 it agreed to an increase in the levy to permit the Trades and Labour Council having a permanent secretary, a post which its delegate, T.J. Houghton, soon filled.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas John Houghton (1862-1933); born Manchester; arrived N.S.W. 1866; apprenticed Grafton 1876; elected delegate from N.S.W.T.A. to Trades and Labour Council, 1888; became its permanent secretary, 1890; M.L.A. The Glebe, 1891. Houghton's co-delegate to the T. & L.C. was William Henry Sharp (1844-1929); born London; apprenticed Eyre & Spottiswoode; emigrated to U.S.A., 1873, but returned to London, 1874; member, London Society of Compositors; arrived in Sydney, 1886; delegate from N.S.W.T.A. to T. & L.C. 1889; President, T. & L.C., 1891-92; M.L.A. Redfern, 1891-94.



The Trades and Labour Council itself had been doing some hard thinking in these years. After 1887, it broke its links with the Protectionist Party, and gradually moved towards the idea that Labour should be represented as a separate interest in Parliament. P.J. Brennan's motion that the Trades and Labour Council should organize for parliamentary representation was carried by 35 votes to 3 on 30 January 1890.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to gauge the response of the N.S.W.T.A. to this decision. The best conclusion seems to be that it accepted it, but with caution, and this view is supported by two pieces of negative evidence. Two days after Brennan's motion was carried, the Association defeated a motion for an address of welcome to their famous fellow craftsman, Henry George, presumably on the grounds that as this might have been taken as an endorsement of his fiscal principles, it would have raised scarcely-buried quarrels. Then in August, the mover of a motion which condemned the manifesto of the Parliamentary Labour Candidate Platform because it did not commit the candidates to a Protectionist policy saw fit to withdraw it from the notice paper of the General Meeting. There were no motions congratulating the Trades and Labour Council on its decision.

#### The South Australian Typographical Association

The S.A.T.A. also refused to commit itself on the direct representation of the trade union movement in parliament, despite the selection of one of its most prominent members to stand as a Trades and Labour Council candidate. It too preferred industrial to parliamentary

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<sup>1</sup>N.B. Nairn, 'The Role of the Trades and Labour Council in N.S.W.', p.438.

action, and moved into closer alliance with the trade union movement in the late eighties. In the degree of its commitment, it was more like the N.S.W.T.A. than the M.T.S.

Almost from its foundation in 1874, the S.A.T.A. had shown a liberality and enterprise not attained by the M.T.S. until the eighties. It did not insist on an indenture as proof of a right to the trade, being quite willing to accept a certificate showing five years' employment. Offenders against the rules of the trade - even some who had 'ratted' - it was willing to admit on fine. It established the first Mortality Fund among typographical societies in 1878,<sup>1</sup> and it took the initiative in the foundation of the Australasian Typographical Union in 1880.

In 1881, the Association was in 'a flourishing state',<sup>2</sup> as it contemplated the rush of business that attended the land boom of 1881. By September of that year, it had 225 members<sup>3</sup> (a very respectable proportion of the craft in Adelaide), owned assets worth almost £1,000, and was maintaining a close control over apprenticeship. After two more years of this prosperity, it attempted to arrange a collective bargain with the Master Printers of Adelaide.

Despite the banquet it tendered and the offer it made to increase the apprentice ratio from 1 : 4 to 1 : 3,<sup>4</sup> it did not manage to reach a collective agreement with the masters. When one of them offered to try to call his colleagues together, the Association called out the men at

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<sup>1</sup>S.A.T.A. Minutes, 5 October 1878.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.XI, no.125, p.118.

<sup>3</sup>Census of South Australia, 1881, in Parliamentary Papers of South Australia 1883-4, vol.IV, no.24. The census showed 598 compositors in the whole of South Australia.

<sup>4</sup>S.A.T.A. Minutes, 6 October 1883.

Carey and Page's office, where the apprentice ratio was being violated, paid them £2 a week, and waited.<sup>1</sup>

They waited over two years, and in that time the South Australian economy slumped badly. At the end of 1883, the Advertiser retrieved its position by becoming a penny paper, and actually put on two or three men, but in 1884 the rest of the trade suffered as unemployment became a 'pressing problem', and wages generally fell.<sup>2</sup> In 1886, over 8800 men left South Australia,<sup>3</sup> and the Report tabled at the Half-Yearly General Meeting in 1886 showed that 27 compositors had left the colony, and only three returned.

In the same February, the Commercial Bank of South Australia closed its doors, and a further depression of wages followed. At least nine trade societies collapsed in the year 1886-7.<sup>4</sup> It was in this period that the Master Printers formed themselves into an Association.<sup>5</sup> No details of the 'amicable settlement' arrived at finally in the winter of 1886 remain, but it is safe to conclude that the new scale provided for no increase in rates.<sup>6</sup>

During this period, the Association identified itself more closely with the labour movement. Since the spring of 1876, it had been a member of associations seeking to combine unions together for greater protection through

<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XIV, no.161, p.438

<sup>2</sup> T.A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry, vol.III, pp.1550-1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.1553/

<sup>4</sup> K. Bowes, 'The 1890 Maritime Strike in South Australia', unpublished M.A. Thesis, Adelaide, 1957, Appendix B.

<sup>5</sup> Formed some time before June 1885. A.T.J., vol.XVI, no.179, p.598.

<sup>6</sup> S.A.T.A. Minutes, 5 June 1886.

increased funds in time of strike.<sup>1</sup> It remained as member and mainstay of the Labour League long after most of the other trades had left it, and when the League finally collapsed in 1881 the Association, on resolution of a general meeting, set about the formation of another 'political association'. The outcome was the National Liberal Reform League, whose objects included the passage of an Employers' Liability Act, a Factory Act, and payment of members.<sup>2</sup> In January 1884, the Trades and Labour Council was formed to deal with trade matters and 'all political questions that have abbearing on the working classes throughout the colony',<sup>3</sup> and the S.A.T.A. joined it shortly afterwards. In the following April, a motion to withdraw from it on the grounds that it was a political organization was defeated. By this time, the S.A.T.A. had had the pleasure of seeing one of the objects of their National Liberal Reform League achieved when, late in 1884, the Employers' Liability Act became law.

The Association was, however, undergoing some change in its attitude towards its fellow unionists. Although it joined the Eight Hours Demonstration Committee in 1878, it appears never to have marched in its processions.<sup>4</sup> On 2 August 1884 the general meeting decided unanimously to buy a banner and march in the procession annually - a resolution later supplemented by others providing trolleys,

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<sup>1</sup> Bowes gives the year of its affiliation with a body called the Labour League as 1875. There is no mention of this in the Minutes, but on 30 September 1876 the S.A.T.A. decided to join a body called the United Trades Association, and within a few months it was meeting in the Labour League Hall.

<sup>2</sup> A.T.J., vol.XIII, nos.154 and 155, pp.382 and 391.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol.XIV, no.170, p.523.

<sup>4</sup> S.A.T.A. Minutes, 30 August 1879.

printing machines, brass bands and poems. In 1885 it decided against sending a delegate to the Intercolonial Trade Union Conference in Sydney, but in 1886 sent its President and Secretary as delegates to the Adelaide Congress and thought it worthwhile to spend £30 on sending its President as a personal delegate to the next conference in Brisbane.<sup>1</sup> In 1887, its Vice-President, Mr R.E. Rogers, became President of the Trades and Labour Council. Meanwhile, the Association had given considerable financial and moral support to the Early Closing Association, and the Melbourne and Adelaide Bootmakers' strikes.

Not only the printers were active in these years. After the breaking of the drought at the end of 1886, there was a slow but perceptible improvement in trade that was given a fillip by the Exhibition in the last quarter of 1887. Then the Broken Hill investment boom brought a period of prosperity that lasted until a slump in September, 1889. During these years 1887-89, 21 new trade societies were formed.

The most spectacular growth of unionism was on the waterfront, where 2000 men formed themselves into a Maritime Labour Council in 1887. By 1887 the shipowners also had organized themselves into an Association, and in October a dispute occurred when the newly-formed Ships' Officers Association sought the help of the Maritime Council in a wage dispute. After a three weeks' strike that involved rioting and the stationing of a hundred police at the Port, the officers withdrew their affiliation.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 28 January 1888 (Half-Yearly General Meeting).

It was in this atmosphere that the Employers' Union was formed at the end of 1887. Chambers of Commerce and Manufacture had existed for some time, and by the beginning of 1887 employers in six trades had organized themselves into Associations.<sup>1</sup> By mid-1887 the Employers' Union had about 60 members, among whom was a heavy concentration of shipowners. Its attempt to form a permanent Board of Conciliation with the help of the Trades and Labour Council had by then clearly failed. When the boom in Broken Hill investment slumped in September 1888, there was considerable tension between employers and employed in the city and port of Adelaide.<sup>2</sup>

This was the time the S.A.T.A. chose to revise its rules and seek increases in the scale of payments. In 1888, it had begun to feel its own strength, and took action in as many disputes as it had in all the years 1881-87 put together. In September, it took its men out of the Colonist office because of the presence of non-unionists. A week later it presented it revised Rules to the Master Printers' Association with a claim for £3 a week in jobbing offices, and, on the advice of the A.T.U., payment for blocks used in newspaper advertisements.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Engineers, Bakers, Butchers, Printers, Shipowners and Pastoralists.

<sup>2</sup>For a different view, see K. Bowes, 'The 1890 Maritime Strike'. Because employers and employees had made some attempt to set up a Board of Conciliation, Bowes concluded that relations between them were cordial. Much of his own evidence suggests another conclusion: that both sides favoured conciliation because each overestimated the strength of the other.

<sup>3</sup>S.A.T.A. Minutes, 6 October 1888.

This last was the cause of the dispute at the Register, one of the three great printing strikes of the eighties. Newspaper lay-out on the two Adealdie morning dailies was far in advance of any others in Australia, and from 1883 both the Register and the Advertiser had been making extensive use of double-column advertisements which featured outsize type of various founts, novel arrangements, and illustrations. This matter carried a heavy penalty payment for the compositor who set it up, and its use on all subsequent occasions was 'fat' for the companionship. The trouble came when the proprietors insisted on making a stereotype of the original, and inserting it in the page as a block. The S.A.T.A. claimed that the companionship should be paid for each use of the block as before, on the grounds that ancient custom had established the right of the companionship to set the whole paper, or else be compensated for space that was taken away from them. The Register proprietors insisted that since the compositors had not done the work of making the block, they should not be paid for its use. The Master Printers' Association supported them.

In mid-November, a Mr Grant was dismissed from the Register companionship. The overseer would give no reason for the dismissal, and when pressed, promised to produce a reference to the effect that Grant was being dismissed neither for incompetence nor misbehaviour. Since Grant was one of those who had been most prominent in the Chapel's negotiation for payment for blocks, the conclusion that this was the reason for his dismissal was inescapable. When all attempts to reinstate him failed, the S.A.T.A.

decided to call the Register men out on strike.<sup>1</sup> It sought the help of the A.T.U., which advised the calling-out of the men in the jobbing departments as well, and promised strike pay. An S.A.T.A. levy made the payment up to £2.15.0. a week for married men, and £2 for single.

Despite this generous allowance, things went badly from the start. The Association's Annual Report showed that by 31 December 1888 31 men had either stayed in, gone in, or gone back. The strike was obviously lost, but still the Association plugged on, with 'chance' arrivals from other colonies eating up its strike pay allowance. Strike pay did not cease entirely until June, but by that time the strike had already been effectively over for months. Its total cost is not clear, but by the end of April, it had cost over £2400 and was by far the most expensive strike that South Australia had seen.<sup>2</sup>

What were the aims of the proprietors in the Register strike? Clearly there was more than the question of payment for blocks involved. There is strong evidence of preparation for the strike, and provocation.<sup>3</sup> The Management offered compositors who would stay in or go in a three year agreement under whose terms they agreed not to leave without fourteen days' notice or 'become a member of the S.A.T.A. or any of a similar nature or having

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 17-19 November 1888.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 27 April 1889. K. Bowes is in error when he claims ('The 1890 Maritime Strike', p.64.) the Tanners and Carriers strike as involving the greatest expense. His allusion to the 'strong' Typographical Union at this time is misleading.

<sup>3</sup>E.G. the Special Meeting of 13 October 1888, a month before the strike, when Grant declared himself a marked man. See also S.A.T.A. Minutes, 24 November 1888, on stored matter.



similar objects'.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, it refused all offers of mediation made by the Trades and Labour Council, which insisted on the principle that men who were taken on should be members of the Association. It was determined to break the Association's influence in the Register office and by its refusal to negotiate with the Trades and Labour Council, the management made the right of the S.A.T.A. to enforce the closed shop the main issue of the strike.

Whether or not it intended to cripple its influence in the trade as a whole, this was certainly the result. By June 1889 when strike pay finally ceased the Association had no funds and owed money; for four months there had been a series of brawls on the Board about right of representation for those on strike, and the payment of moneys to them. A President had been deposed, and Supreme Court action threatened.<sup>2</sup> From the time of the Register strike, the S.A.T.A. ceased to play any active part in the South Australian labour movement for several years to come.

Defeat in the Register strike did not convince the S.A.T.A. that it should substitute political for industrial action. As early as 1887, the Trades and Labour Council had 'endorsed' nine candidates<sup>3</sup> to represent it in the parliamentary elections of that year but the S.A.T.A.'s Board of Management made no recommendation of the Council's

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<sup>1</sup>W.G. Spence, Australia's Awakening, p.113.

<sup>2</sup>S.A.T.A. Minutes, 29 December 1888 and 15 March 1889.

<sup>3</sup>W.G. Spence, Australia's Awakening, Sydney, 1909, p.338. These candidates were not selected and endorsed in the manner of later Labour Parties; the Council merely declared its approval of some who had already nominated independently of it.

choice to members. In the past, the Association had been interested in the lobbying of members on particular issues, but party support was something different. Defeat in the Register strike did not change the Association's opinion. In April 1890 the Trades and Labour Council sent the Board a circular on the establishment of a Parliamentary Elections Fund, 'but nothing was done.'<sup>1</sup> In its badly weakened state, the Association was not going to risk further division among its members by raising the question of party loyalties.

#### The Queensland Typographical Association

In Brisbane, a large strike in the printing trade also failed in 1889, but its result had the opposite effect on the Association's attitude to the representation of the trade union movement in parliament. A few months after the strike, individually enthusiastic members were able to commit the Association to a body pledged to the return of parliamentary representatives whose aim was to remake social conditions.

The Q.T.A. had skipped almost entirely the phase of co-operation with the 'fair' employer in organizing the trade. At its inauguration in April 1884, the Q.T.A. claimed a membership of over 100 of the 125 compositors said to be in Brisbane.<sup>2</sup> It accepted as members those who could show they had worked at the trade for seven years, irrespective of indentures, and journeymen guilty of quite serious breaches of Rule could usually expiate their offence by payment of a fine.

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XXI, no.238, p.2030.

<sup>2</sup> A typographical society had been established in Brisbane in 1873, but had lapsed after a year. Those still formally members wound it up, and voted its remaining funds (£40) to the Q.T.A. See Board of Management Minutes 26 July, 1884.

Because its policy in these matters was liberal, and because the Brisbane printing trade was so much smaller than those of Sydney and Melbourne, the Q.T.A. achieved success in enforcing the closed shop principle more quickly than the southern Societies. When it was little more than a year old, it forced the management of the Courier to reinstate two men it had dismissed by threat of strike.<sup>1</sup> A week after that, it compelled the master printers to attend a conference they had previously rejected, and extracted from them both rises in wages and the eight-hour day.<sup>2</sup> The Agreement operated from 2 November 1885, and when Watson, Ferguson and Co. offered their men a 50-hours week, with the last two hours to be worked at overtime rates, the Association closed their office and withdrew the compositors.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, it withdrew its members from Pole, Outridge and Co. when the firm took on a non-unionist.<sup>4</sup>

It followed from this aggressive policy that the Q.T.A. showed none of that ambivalence of loyalty characteristic of the southern Societies in the mid-eighties. It was affiliated with the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council from the Council's inception. The Board meeting at 6 June 1885 appointed delegates to represent it at the meeting to found a Trades and Labour Council.<sup>5</sup> The Society joined the Council in August,<sup>6</sup> and W.P. Colborne, Vice-President of the Q.T.A.

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<sup>1</sup> Board of Management Minutes, 7 September 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1885.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 14 November 1885. The Q.T.A. paid £3 a week strike pay to its members.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 23 December 1887.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 6 June 1885.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 29 August 1885.

became the Council's first secretary.<sup>1</sup> From that time, the Q.T.A. associated itself energetically with Trades Hall activities, marched with enthusiasm on Eight-Hour Day,<sup>2</sup> urged representation of the Trades and Labour Council at the Intercolonial Conferences, and sometimes sent its own delegates.

The Association was increasingly inclined to take a national view of the trades union movement. On 28 April the Board resolved:

that the date of the eight hours Demonstration should be altered from 1 March to 21 April, the day on which the Melbourne Trades hold their gathering, this being a step towards the inauguration of an Australian Labour holiday.<sup>3</sup>

The General Meeting recommended the change to the Trades and Labour Council. The same meeting passed a long motion in favour of Australia-wide organization of typographical unions and adopted the Board's recommendation for affiliation with the A.T.U. This had come up before, but the stumbling block had always been Rule 10 which required the joining society to relinquish some of its sovereignty over the closing of offices for a guarantee of financial assistance during the strike. This time the Q.T.A. decided to amend its rules as required.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William Parry Colborne (1859-1945): Born Suffolk; arrived in Melbourne, 1878; migrated to Adelaide, then to Sydney, New Zealand, and U.S.A.; arrived Brisbane 1884; Secretary, Trades and Labour Council, 1885; President Q.T.A., 1886, 1899-1901; Secretary, Q.T.A. and Queensland Branch P.I.E.U.A. 1903-39; Member of Brisbane General Strike Committee, 1912; Legislative Councillor, 1920; Federal President, P.I.E.U.A., 1921-22.

<sup>2</sup>The enthusiasm of the Q.T.A. for public demonstration contrasted strongly with the attitude of members of southern Societies, whose secretaries in the mid-eighties often deplored the Society's failure to make a good showing in processions.

<sup>3</sup>Board of Management Minutes, 28 April 1888.

<sup>4</sup>General Meeting Minutes, 28 April 1888.

The Association also strengthened its internal organization. In April 1888 a ballot of members approved the establishment of an Unemployment Fund like that of the M.T.S., and the provision of a Funeral Benefit Fund to replace the custom of sending round the hat.<sup>1</sup> In the same month, the Secretary and President founded a Branch at Ipswich,<sup>2</sup> and in the winter of 1888 the Secretary began a tour of organization that took him to Maryborough, Rockhampton, Townsville, and Charters Towers.<sup>3</sup> In October, the Board ordered a start on the recruiting of pressmen and machinists. Early in the new year, the Q.T.A. decided to admit bookbinders, lithographers and paper rulers,<sup>4</sup> and became the first of the Australian typographical societies to transform itself into a union of all printing craftsmen.

In these first six years of its life, the Q.T.A. had no direct interest in politics. It had taken considerable interest in the government's immigration policy and shown especial concern at the indenturing of skilled labour, but solved this problem in its own way by writing to the London Society of Compositors.<sup>5</sup> It developed no parliamentary contacts like those of the Melbourne Typographical Society, and showed no interest in a Factory Act. Until mid-1889, it regarded the closed shop as sufficient to its industrial needs. Its interest in the direct representation of labour

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<sup>1</sup> Board of Management Minutes, dated 6 April 1888. The proposals were carried by 134 votes to 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 14 April 1888.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 16 June 1888.

<sup>4</sup> General Meeting Minutes, 26 January 1889.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 9 February 1889.

in Parliament before then can be attributed only to its general identification with the problems of its fellow trade unionists, and its trust in its most prominent members.

The Association had begun by declaring itself a non-political organization. In June 1884 the Board instructed its Secretary to write a disclaimer to some comment that appeared on Samuel Griffith in the A.T.J., and request its editor not to publish anything further on religion or politics.<sup>1</sup> But only eighteen months later, the Half-Yearly General Meeting resolved:

that this meeting requests the President and Secretary of the Q.T.A. to communicate with the officials of the Trades and Labour Council as to the desirableness of selecting at least two labour candidates to contest various constituencies around Brisbane at the next general election of members of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

Two years later, when the Trades and Labour Council again sponsored candidates, two of them were Colborne and Hinchcliffe, who contested Fortitude Valley and Toombul respectively. After the Telegraph had ordered Hinchcliffe either to retire or be dismissed, a special meeting carried a vote of sympathy, worded a draft rule on frivolous dismissal, and voted £20 to the campaigns.<sup>3</sup>

Interest in the parliamentary representation of trade unions was confirmed and formalized by the failure of the Brisbane General Printing Strike. At the end of 1888, Pole, Outridge and Co. was still a closed office. When a fire destroyed part of its plant, it sought to have some of its work done by Watson, Ferguson and Co., only recently become

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<sup>1</sup>Board of Management Minutes, 21 June 1884.

<sup>2</sup>General Meeting Minutes, 30 January 1886.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 14 April 1888.

an open office again. The compositors and machinists at Watson, Ferguson, refused to do work for the closed office, and the overseer dismissed them. On the following Saturday, the firm notified its seven bookbinders and paper rulers that they must either secede from the Q.T.A. or leave the office. They left, and when Pole, Outridge's work appeared at the bookbinding works of Mr O. Hagen, his men left too.<sup>1</sup>

Attempts to settle the dispute by conference failed. The Master Printers' Association expressed its 'approval of the action taken by Messrs Watson, Ferguson & Co. in rendering assistance to Messrs Pole, Outridge & Co.' and told the Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council that they 'could see no reason to hope that any good result would follow a conference'. In reply the Association resolved 'that in the event of a further dispute the Q.T.A. will be compelled to deal with the associated offices as a whole, and not with employees individually.'<sup>2</sup> Mr Hagen took his men back on the understanding that he would 'hold over all objectionable work for the present.'<sup>3</sup> When he broke his promise, a Special Meeting of 30 March resolved:

That in the event of a conference not taking place and a satisfactory settlement of the difficulty obtained by 6 p.m. on Wednesday, the Board be directed to call the whole of the members out of the associated offices on Friday morning. That Mr Hagen's employees be withdrawn at once.

At the Conference which followed, the President of the Q.T.A. made it plain that the Association would fight to the end to maintain its right to refuse to work with non-unibnists,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 26 January, 9 and 23 February, 30 March 1889.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 23 February 1889.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 30 March 1889.

'Their members seeing the continual breaking away of the offices came to the decision that if such was to be the case, they would go down altogether'.<sup>1</sup> The masters had determined to act only in concert, and arranged for the recruitment of compositors in Sydney and Melbourne. The 'rats' 'almost poured into the town';<sup>2</sup> on May 9, a special meeting of the Q.T.A. decided on compromise, and on 6 May, the strike was over. The M.P.A. had been so successful in its recruitment of non-union labour that of 108 men who signed the Q.T.A.'s Call Book on 6 May, only 30 were taken back by their employers.<sup>3</sup> The Telegraph became virtually a non-unionist daily and at Warwick and Sapsford's, one of the largest jobbing offices, the non-unionists outnumbered the members of the Q.T.A. This was the end of the closed shop in the Queensland Printing trade for a long time to come.

Before the strike was over, the Q.T.A. had bound itself even more firmly to the labour movement. The Fifth Inter-colonial Trades Union Congress held at Brisbane in 1888 had concerned itself far more than any preceding Congress with social panaceas and reconstructions. The Conference delegated to the Brisbane Labour Council the task of drawing up a plan for the federation of all unions, and the Council produced a draft constitution for a body to be called the Australian Labour Federation. The A.L.F. aimed at co-ordinating both the industrial and political activity of unions. Its political ideals were socialist and utopian, after the fashion of Edward Bellamy's, as expounded by William Lane.

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<sup>1</sup>Brisbane Courier, 4 April 1889.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.XIX, no.226, p.1023.

<sup>3</sup>Strike Diary, 6 May 1889.



In November, the Q.T.A. discussed the A.L.F.'s provisional rules. There was strong opposition to their adoption on two grounds: first, that the Q.T.A. owed its first loyalty to its trade association, the A.T.U.; and second, that one of the proposed objects of the federation was the direct representation of Labour in Parliament (Rule 2). The motion for adoption was lost.<sup>1</sup> Six months later, on 5 May 1889 - a day before the end of the printing strike - the Q.T.A. affiliated with the Australian Labour Federation.<sup>2</sup> It thereby committed itself to three principles: that some re-construction of society was necessary; that political action was a necessary supplement to industrial action; and that labouring men could only be satisfactorily represented in parliament by their own party.

#### The Australasian Typographical Union

The Brisbane General Printing Trade Strike collapsed because the A.T.U. had failed on one of its first purposes: to prevent the transfer of one city's unemployed to another. The Union virtually owed its existence to its founders' conviction that, from the point of view of the trade unionist, easier travel was not an unmixed blessing. As in the seventies, railway mileage increased and steamship travel became cheaper, so compositors had begun to move about more freely. A man who lost his frame in Melbourne could take up the offer of one in Sydney or Adelaide for a steerage fare of about £2 in 1880, and young fellows anxious to see the country by 'tramping it' for a while could travel overland by train and river steamer, picking up 'sits' on the way.

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<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., vol.XIX, no.219, p.971.

<sup>2</sup>General Meeting Minutes, 5 May 1889.

In 1881, about a quarter of the M.T.S.'s 93 new members came on clearance from societies in South Australia, New South Wales and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

This mobility of the work force helped the rough equation of demand with supply at a more or less uniform price. The idea of levelling up conditions began to concern men in those local societies that found themselves behind the others in this detail or that. Another idea concerned them as well. If improved transport made it easier for compositors to travel from one colony to another in search of work in fair times, how much easier would it be for employers to import 'rat' companionship when times were bad?

In January 1880, the Half-Yearly Annual General Meeting of the South Australian Typographical Association instructed a Special Committee to consider ways by which a union of colonial typographical societies could be achieved. The Committee reported

That experience has demonstrated that the efforts of individuals or isolated Societies, however determined, have been unavailing in maintaining a fair and adequate rate of wages, or in preventing the continual attempts made to restrict the rights and privileges of the trade, and in order to maintain that desirable end, be it resolved -

That the Secretary of the S.A.T.A. ...write to the various Societies throughout the Australasian Colonies, with a view to each of them appointing a delegate or delegates to meet...in Melbourne, during the International Exhibition, for the purpose of endeavouring to carry out the following objects:-

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<sup>1</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 1881. There were most likely some new members from other colonies who had not belonged to a Society, so that the proportion is almost certainly higher. Some travelling comps only stayed a short time in any one place. W.P. Colborne, later Secretary of the Q.T.A., was reported in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Goulburn between 1880-82.

The formation of a 'Union' or 'Association' to be called the 'Australasian Typographical Union' based on the principle of the International Typographical Union of North America, or the Typographical Association in England, the chief principles of which are:

That they possess original and exclusive jurisdiction in all matters pertaining to the craft. All subordinate unions or Branch Societies assemble under their warrant, and derive their authority from them, enabling them to make all necessary laws for their OWN GOVERNMENT. They are the ultimate tribunals to which all matters of general importance... are referred, and their decisions thereon are final and conclusive.....<sup>1</sup>

Delegates from South Australia, N.S.W., New Zealand, and the M.T.S. duly met in Melbourne, and they agreed to Union, but hardly on the alleged principles of the International Typographical Union of North America, or the Typographical Association of England. The South Australian delegates in their Report, noticed that:

Most of the delegates seemed to be saddled with the fear that federation might mean the sacrificing of the individuality of the different Societies in the proposed Union (a sacrifice that they were by no means prepared to make).<sup>2</sup>

The Constitution of the A.T.U. as decided on certainly made little demand for the sacrifice of individuality. The Council could decide only on those matters that were referred to it, and even then its decision was not binding. It was to be permanently located in Melbourne (where M.T.S. members would represent the other

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<sup>1</sup> S.A.T.A. Minutes, 7 February 1880. So far as I know, the A.T.U. was the first successful federated union in Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 18 December 1880

Societies) and its income was to be limited to a 12 per cent charge on the gross annual receipts of each society; of this 12 per cent, only one-sixth could be used for running expenses, the rest going into a Reserve Fund on which the Council could not operate for three years. Even under these conditions, the New Zealand Societies and the newly-formed N.S.W. Typographical Association refused to join, and the Australasian Typographical Union was left a Union of the Melbourne, Ballarat and South Australian Societies.

At the end of six years, the A.T.U. still had very little to show. It had projected a Superannuation Scheme, which had failed; it had attempted unsuccessfully to form a Society at Geelong; it had decided that the drawing-up of a national scale of prices and regulations for apprenticeship were beyond it. When it had attempted the first revision of its Rules, its pretensions to increased power had been squashed by the M.T.S., who refused to accept its suggestions. The Board of the M.T.S. drew up their own amendments, and these were 'accepted by the A.T.U. almost in their entirety'.<sup>1</sup>

It is hard to see much on the credit side. The Council had adjudicated on a few minor questions of charges for setting on piece. The M.T.S. had followed its advice on the opening of an office, but its advice in a dispute referred to it by Ballarat was scorned by that Society. It had attracted the two new Tasmanian Societies, but their membership proved more of a liability than an asset, the Union having to pay out over £100 over an unsuccessful strike at the Hobart Mercury. The President, Mr James Wilson, put the best possible face on it when in the second Triennial Report, he said:

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XVI, no.177, p.580.

Although the Union so far has no very great record to show, yet the Council are confident it has been of service in drawing closer together and in strengthening the hands of the Societies in connection with it.<sup>1</sup>

From 1887, the Union's importance in typographical affairs increased steadily. Ironically, this was due to the greater industrial power of the constituent societies themselves, and especially that of the M.T.S. As its membership rapidly grew, so the 12 per cent of gross annual receipts became a substantial contribution to Union finances, and the Reserve Fund, scarcely operated on except for the Tasmanian venture, began to accumulate a tidy sum. In the event of a strike, the A.T.U. could be an ally of some strength; it could make substantial donations, and it was in the best position to prevent the supply of 'rats' from the other colonies. In times of industrial peace, it could do valuable preparatory work by following out one of the objects much discussed at the time of its formation - the setting up of societies in places where they did not exist. When the Societies in the colonial capitals began to contemplate strike action in the late eighties, they began to take the A.T.U. more seriously.

In November 1888, delegates of the principal typographical societies, whether members of the A.T.U. or not, met under the auspices of the M.T.S., and decided to recommend some most important amendments to the A.T.U. Rules. Rule 12 had formerly required a member society to apply to the Council of the Union for permission to close a shop if it wished any financial help in the matter. The amendment gave member societies virtual autonomy in a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol.XVII, no.193, p.710.

decision to strike, and obliged the A.T.U. to pay over substantial per capita relief when the strike was in defence of a trade principle. Another amendment would have given the A.T.U. power to levy constituent societies according to membership whenever its Reserve Fund fell below £1,000. In essence, this was a power designed to raise a Strike Fund on behalf of any one Society by levy of all Society members throughout the colonies.<sup>1</sup>

These recommendations were not considered until November 1889, and then they were adopted in a weakened form.<sup>2</sup> But by this time, the A.T.U. had proved that even under its old rules it was capable of making available strike funds of a size hitherto unknown in Australia. In the year ended 30th June 1889, the M.T.S. alone paid out £1020 to the A.T.U., and the Union itself spent £1595 on the Register strike. Potential of this kind could not be ignored. Of the Societies that had held aloof, the Wellington Society, New Zealand, joined in December 1888, and the N.S.W.T.A. in the March of 1890. The new societies formed at the Barrier and in Perth applied for membership almost immediately after their formation in 1888 and 1889. When N.S.W. joined, every typographical society on the mainland had affiliated with the A.T.U. and it had an outpost across the Tasman.<sup>3</sup>

The organization of the A.T.U. in 1880 had preceded the scheme put forward for the federation of trades at the Intercolonial Trade Union Congress of 1889, and the Congresses that followed. These depended in the main on the amalgamation at the colonial level of the different

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid., vol.XIX, No.219, p.949.

<sup>2</sup>  
See Rules of the A.T.U., 1889, nos.XV and XIX.

<sup>3</sup>  
Queensland had joined in May 1888.

craft societies which covered the members of one trade. The A.T.U. was not constructed on that principle, and never showed any interest in following any of the models by which the Congresses planned to advance the common interests of all trade unions, and provide them with some organ of common expression. It remained throughout the eighties a body exclusively concerned with protecting the craft privileges of compositors, and it never troubled to make explicit any implications its actions might have had for the organization of a working class.

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### British and Colonial Typographical Societies

In the 1880's, the tactics and policy of the Australian typographical societies underwent far more rapid change than those of the British. The colonial societies all adopted those innovations in British practice that the M.T.S. had declined to follow in the seventies. By the end of the eighties, tendencies vaguely apparent in the policy of British societies had all made their appearance in the colonies in a far stronger form, and the colonial societies were broader in outlook, more vigorous in action and far further towards adopting a political position based on an assumption of conflict of interests between an employing and an employed class.

In 1890, the British societies still held the same views on the admission of members as they had twenty years before. The London Society of Compositors from time to time admitted as members men employed in shops they 'opened', irrespective of whether or not they had served an indentured apprenticeship. But neither the Typographical Association nor the Scottish Typographical Association were prepared to

be 'otherwise satisfied'. The Queensland Typographical Association broke new ground by accepting as members men who worked in the kindred trades.

Besides opening membership to men previously excluded, the colonial societies set out to make membership more attractive by instituting the benefit schemes that the British societies had developed from the mid-sixties. The Melbourne Typographical Society modelled its Mortality Fund on that of the London Society of Compositors, as had the South Australian Typographical Society before it. The Mortality Funds of the other societies were very similar. By 1887, all the societies except the S.A.T.A. had overcome their prejudices against the unemployed sufficiently to begin to operate unemployment benefit funds. As in the case of the British societies, contribution to benefit funds was compulsory; and the executives of colonial typographical societies were as well aware as their British equivalents of the disciplinary power over members they could exercise through these funds.

Both the British and colonial societies developed a greater interest in the affairs of the trade union movement in these years, but this interest was far stronger in colonial societies by the end of the eighties. The M.T.S. delegates to the Melbourne Trades Hall Council led the movement which resulted in that body taking on the functions of a Trades and Labour Council, and the Brisbane Trades Hall Council owed its existence in part to the typographical association delegates. Both the N.S.W.T.A. and the S.A.T.A. were early members of the Sydney and Adelaide Councils. All of the colonial societies donated generously to the strike funds of other unions: the M.T.S. donated £500 to the



Melbourne Bootmakers, and £287 to the London Dockers in their strike of 1889. Neither the Typographical Association nor the London Society of Compositors despite their far greater membership seem to have donated sums even remotely resembling these in size.<sup>1</sup> It seems fair to conclude that their interest in the welfare of the fellow unionists was slighter.

The willingness of the colonial societies to donate generously to other unions parallels the increasing abandonment of the theory of identity of interest between employer and employee in this decade, and their gradual acceptance of the view that they had more in common with their fellow trade unionists. In the early eighties, the societies and the 'fair' employers had co-operated with mutual advantage, and the societies included in their rules clauses to facilitate the settlement of disputes by arbitration. This general atmosphere of harmonious co-operation changed rather rapidly. Like the London Society of Compositors and the Typographical Association, the colonial societies made use of the 'Fair List', but in Sydney and Melbourne the typographical societies made it a weapon for forcing the 'closed shop' on the employer - a function it seems not to have had in London or the Provinces. As membership grew, and shops were closed to non-unionists, the colonial societies specifically rejected arbitration and made demands on their employers backed by threat of strike. In those colonies, the strikes threatened (or performed) were not small strikes against one or two employers, like those of the London Society of Compositors and the Typographical Association in this period - but strikes which threatened the whole job printing industry.

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<sup>1</sup> Except in the sole instance of the Dockers' Strike. The L.S.C. on that occasion voted £500. Its membership then was about eight times that of the M.T.S.

The increased value that the colonial societies placed on the strike weapon allowed them to achieve what the British societies were unable to agree on - a union of all typographical societies. The A.T.U. had as its main object the creation of a sizeable Reserve Fund and the realisation of this Fund's potential enduced those societies who had at first stood out against the Union to join it in the late eighties. The British typographical societies remained separate until the creation of the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation - a far less potent body than the A.T.U. - in 1891. Even then, the London Society of Compositors held aloof, and the Scottish Typographical Association seceded almost immediately.

The colonial societies' involvement with large scale strike action also influenced their attitude towards the representation of 'the labour interest' in parliament by a separate working class party, and resulted in one of them declaring emphatically for it. The British societies were strongly opposed to any intrusion of 'politics' into their affairs, or the affairs of the Trade Union Conference, until 1889, when the London Society of Compositors and the Typographical Association voted by small majorities in favour of the establishment of an eight-hour day by act of parliament. This seems to have been the practical limit of their interest even then.

The only colonial society to take no interest in the parliamentary representation of working men's interests by working men was the S.A.T.A. Virtually ruined by the Register strike, it was apparently not going to risk division of its members by taking part in 'politics'. The M.T.S. took only a token interest, but it was not opposed,

and its secretary was a most vocal and able advocate for the establishment of a labour party. In Sydney, the N.S.W.T.A. showed no enthusiasm for the Trades and Labour Council's proposal for parliamentary representation, but it was clearly divesting itself of prejudices against 'politics'. In Brisbane, the Q.T.A. lost its strike to maintain the closed shop principle, and members voted for affiliation with the Australian Labour Federation and the representation of labour-in-parliament, apparently convinced that working class organization and working class representation were both necessary to achieve what action by individual unions could not.

It was in this respect that the Q.T.A. differed most from the other typographical societies. The immediate occasion of its decision to affiliate with the Australian Labour Federation was its failure in the Brisbane General Printing Strike. The S.A.T.A. also fought a strike that failed, and it shunned participation in 'politics'; but there were some important differences between the issues in the two strikes, as well as in their consequences. The Register strike began over the issue of payment, and only later became a dispute over the rights of unions; in Brisbane, the strike was from the outset over the Q.T.A.'s right to enforce the closed shop. In Adelaide, the issue was between one employer and his union employees; in Brisbane, virtually all union members and all employers were in dispute. Conflict of interest between employer and employee was therefore far more sharply focussed in Brisbane.

There were significant differences also in the effect that the failure of the strikes had on the morale of the

respective unions. In Adelaide, where the strike dragged on much longer, the S.A.T.A. ended heavily in debt, and with its membership badly divided. In Brisbane, the Q.T.A. was beaten but by no means bowed: by the end of 1889, its funds were clearly recovering, members had responded well to levies, and the Board's Report referred to the Association's effort in the strike with pride.<sup>1</sup> There seem to be two main reasons why the Q.T.A. proved more resilient: first, that its insistence on union principle had brought quick success, and second, that the labour movement in Queensland was more class-conscious and aggressive than in the other colonies.

From the outset, the Q.T.A. had been able to control a very high proportion of Brisbane compositors, and soon managed to enforce the 'closed shop' almost throughout the trade. Its policy was aggressive, and a little more than a year after its foundation, it was able to enforce both an eight hour day and wage rises. Unfortunately, it is not possible to say why the masters were prepared to yield so easily, since the statistics of the printing trade in Queensland for the eighties are the worst of all the colonies.

On the other hand, the evidence makes it clear that the Q.T.A.'s campaign to establish the closed shop was simultaneous with the campaigns of other unions and that executive members of the Q.T.A. were in close contact with other Queensland labour leaders. Colborne and Hinchcliffe, both of them later to be of considerable influence in the

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A.T.J., Vol.XXI, no.235, p.2005.

labour movement, were in the eighties young men whose prestige stood high with Association members.<sup>1</sup> They were friends of William Lane, worked with him in the foundation of the Trades and Labour Council, and in the Boomerang and Worker enterprises<sup>2</sup>. Through them the Association was linked closely to that section of the Australian labour movement that wanted to go 'too far and too fast' for the men of the other colonies. The inspiration of these men and of the words and deeds of the Queensland Labour Movement as a whole, help explain the continued militancy of the Q.T.A. after the failure of its strike.

The Q.T.A.'s decision to endorse the organization of a parliamentary labour party can also be partly explained in the negative way that the forces discouraging interest in 'politics' were not so strong in Queensland as in the other colonies. There was no serious dispute over the tariff as in N.S.W. The Association had no connections with radical parliamentarians, as in Victoria, and Queensland parliamentary politics do not seem to have produced any group of parliamentarians that could attract the support of working men as did Kingston and some of his parliamentary supporters in South Australia.

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It is easier to make some explanation as to why colonial typographical societies differed in the extent of

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It would be interesting to know more of the background of Q.T.A. members in the eighties. If Colborne was at all representative of them, then their youth and venturesome nature would constitute an additional reason for the militancy of the Association. It is also possible that a high proportion of them were 'colonials' with no preconceptions about the proper relation between employer and society to constrain them.

<sup>2</sup>Information about W.P. Colborne comes mainly from random references in the A.T.J. and the P.T.J., and from his son, Mr. C. Colborne. The Mitchell Library appears to have lost W.P. Colborne's private papers.

their interest in trade union and labour politics than to explain why the colonial societies as a whole were more interested in these matters than their British contemporaries. The histories of the British typographical societies offer little explanation of their slowly increasing interest in 'politics' towards the end of the eighties, nor do they present facts from which an explanation may be readily made. The records of the colonial societies that abandoned co-operation with the 'fair' employer for threat of strike action against all employers are nowhere explicit about the reasons for their change in tactics or political outlook. The following explanation is therefore fairly tentative.

It has already been shown that typographical societies were of considerable value to the 'fair' employer in the early eighties in that they were means by which his 'unfair' competitors could be made to compete on more equal terms. The M.T.S. and the N.S.W.T.A. had at first no occasion for strike action against the Master Printers' Association, since they were formed from 'fair' employers, and the societies were mainly concerned with 'levelling up' the rates paid by their 'unfair' competition. But the second round of demands they made in the late eighties was on the Master Printers' Associations themselves, and was concerned with putting the price up on all employers alike. The increase in strength that the societies had so rapidly achieved encouraged them to threaten strike when the Master Printers' Associations resisted, and refusal by the Master Printers' Associations meant that this time strike would involve a very large number of employers. In Sydney and Melbourne, the societies were conspicuously successful on both occasions.

The important contrast with the bargaining practice of British societies was that the British societies never bargained with master printers collectively. For reasons that the histories of the British societies do not discuss, British master printers did not form themselves into an association in this period.<sup>1</sup> This seems to have had important effects. It encouraged the societies and their members to continue thinking about employers as individuals who were 'good' or 'bad', rather than as forming a class of all of whose members possessed identical interests; and it meant that such gains as the societies made in bargaining were fragmentary and therefore less sweeping and dramatic than those achieved in Australia where the rate for the whole industry was changed by union action. In any case, the British societies won only few gains in the eighties. They were less clearly the instrument of the employee against the employer than the colonial societies, and therefore less likely to influence their members towards thinking of themselves as being united as a group in opposition to the interests of all employers in the industry - a point of view that sanctions industrial militancy.

This is by no means to suggest that the Australian societies were more successful than the British simply because they were more militant, or that rises in wages and improvements in conditions are simply the result of action by unions. The societies' success in Sydney and Melbourne coincided with a period of boom<sup>2</sup> in the printing

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<sup>1</sup>The formation of a Master Printers' Association to cover London or the Provinces was of course a far more difficult task than the organization of one in a colonial capital.

<sup>2</sup>Inadequacy of Australian record, and the absence of British, makes any statement on the relative profitability of the two printing industries impossible.

industry of those cities, and the unwillingness of the Master Printers' Associations to resist the threats of strikes in the late eighties is most simply explained by the assumption that employers considered the industry sufficiently profitable even when it had to pay the higher rates decided by the societies. In Britain also, there seems to have been something of a boom in the printing industry in the eighties, but how it compared with that of Sydney and Melbourne is impossible to say. In Australia however it seems that profitability of the industry contributed to the adoption of aggression by unions to the extent that success in extracting one set of demands encourages optimism about the chances of succeeding with the next set. The success that followed the threatened strikes in Sydney and Melbourne in 1888<sup>1</sup> also encouraged the view that employers as a class could be best dealt with by strong union action.

Any explanation of the adoption of the societies' militant tactics and support for a parliamentary labour party solely in terms of bargaining activity within the printing industry ignores the influence that ideas and the practice of other unions can exert. Edward Bellamy and Henry George and other popular writers on social reconstruction were read in both Britain and Australia in the eighties, and seem to have had their greatest influence at much the same time. But the 'new unions' rose to power earlier in Australia, and the Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses adopted a militant outlook earlier than the British Trade Union Congresses. The influence of

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See the comment of John Hancock, above, p.116



the Intercolonial Congresses on at least some leading members of the typographical societies was considerable<sup>1</sup>, and to some extent the colonial societies were more advanced politically than the British because the Australian Labour movement was itself more 'advanced'.

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. the conversion of Mr Ellis, President of the N.S.W.T.A. See above, p. 132

## CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOCIETIES IN THE NINETIESThe Linotype and The British Typographical Societies

Newspaper proprietors in Britain had experimented with mechanical type-setting machines from the 1860s. It was not until the late eighties, with the improvement of the Hattersley machine, and the manufacture of the Thorne, that mechanical type-setting became even a moderately attractive proposition in newspaper composing rooms. At that stage the invention of the Linotype machine made all existing machines obsolete.

Ottmar Mergenthaler first made machine composing really attractive to newspaper proprietors, and he did so by entirely changing its principle. He abandoned the idea of assembling ready-made type, and developed what was in fact a slug-casting machine. As the operator touched keys, matrices of the letters required fell into line in the machine's composing stick. For spacing between words, there were wedge-shaped pieces that could be dropped into the stick in the same way. These then expanded until the line was justified to its proper measure, and was ready for casting. Molten metal poured over assembled matrices and spaces, and the machine then automatically cast and trimmed its line of type. The used matrices and spaces were then carried back to their magazine, where they were distributed into their proper places by a spindle that 'felt' for the distinctive nicks on their bodies. The slug of type once used could be put back into the metal pot, melted down and used again and again.

The first linotype machine in Britain was installed in the office of the Newcastle Chronicle in 1890, but Linotypes were not used for newspaper compositors in London until 1893. In the next two years, most London newspapers installed them, and their installation continued throughout the Provinces and in Scotland until by 1902, 'hand composition was rapidly becoming a thing of the past in newspaper offices'.<sup>1</sup> Their spread through the book industry was much slower, and Musson estimates that as late as 1914 perhaps half job and book setting was still being done by hand.<sup>2</sup>

An increase in unemployment followed their introduction, but it was not a startling one. In 1890, unemployment in the printing and bookbinding industry, and as an average of all industries, was a little under 2.5 per cent. In 1894, unemployment in printing and bookbinding reached a peak of 5.9 per cent and the average for all industries was 7.7 per cent. Thereafter, unemployment average for all industries diminished for the rest of the nineties. Unemployment in printing and bookbinding also declined, but more slowly, until 1898, when it rose again slowly. Unemployment in printing and bookbinding was about 4 per cent in 1898, and by 1902 was the same as the average for all industries - something slightly under 5 per cent.<sup>3</sup> The sums paid out as unemployment benefit by the L.S.C. and the T.A. are in accord with this general picture. Both societies felt confident enough of the future to liberalize their unemployment

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<sup>1</sup>

Musson, The Typographical Association, p.101

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., p.102.

<sup>3</sup>

See the graph in Elford, 'The London Letterpress Printing Industry', p.224.

benefit funds in the late nineties.<sup>1</sup> That the introduction of the machines caused such little disruption in employment was a result of the constant expansion of the printing trade in the nineties, and especially of the expansion of the book and jobbing industry. The historians of the London Society of Compositors point to 'The constant expansion of the printing trade, both in and out of London...',<sup>2</sup> and the historians of both the T.A. and the S.T.A. give their account in the same terms.<sup>3</sup>

In their negotiations with employers over the working of Linotypes, the societies insisted on three principles: that the machines should be worked full-time only by journeymen compositors who were society members; that the working day of the operator should be less than that of the hand compositor; and that the instruction of apprentices on the machines should be carefully limited. The Societies were successful in establishing each of these principles by agreement before 1900. The T.A. managed to secure an agreement with the Linotype Users' Association that guaranteed these conditions throughout the Provinces.

The histories of the typographical societies do not explain why they were so successful in their negotiations. Some of their success however probably rested on their increasing control over journeymen compositors. The membership of both the T.A. and the L.S.C. increased rapidly in the nineties, and the proportion of workmen in the industry

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<sup>1</sup>In 1894, the L.S.C. paid out over £16,000 in unemployed benefit; in 1898, £9,564. It liberalized its scheme in 1899. The T.A. paid out £6,814 in 1894, and £6,924 in 1898, despite more generous payments in the latter year.

<sup>2</sup>

Howe and Waite, The London Society of Compositors, p.235.

<sup>3</sup>

Unemployment rates for compositors as a group within the printing industry are not quoted in any of the sources available.

who were 'society men' also showed significant increase.<sup>1</sup> This success in recruitment seems to have resulted partly from the compositors' changing attitude towards their employers.

Alford sees the Linotype machines themselves as being largely responsible for this change. All other mechanization had increased the demand for compositors' skills; the Linotype machine reduced demand, and its installation looked like an aggressive act on the employers' part. Further, the Linotype owners were anxious to get the most out of their machines, and they adopted 'speed-up' tactics to that end.<sup>2</sup> Cannon points to the longer decline in relative wage status of the compositor, and its 'levelling' effect on compositors' attitudes towards workmen who were not compositors.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the causes, typographical societies did strengthen their relationships with one another and with the labour movement in the nineties. The L.S.C. sunk its differences with the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation in 1900<sup>4</sup>, and by 1901 the Federation had wide enough coverage to proclaim itself the National Printing and Kindred Trades

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<sup>1</sup>

At least in London. In 1891, there were 15,620 compositors in London, and 9,350 - or about 60 per cent - were members of the L.S.C. In 1901, there were 15,740 compositors, 11,287 - or 72 per cent - of whom were L.S.C. members.

<sup>2</sup>Employers tried to insist on the marking of copy and the fitting of line-counting devices to the machines. The 'bundy' clock made its appearance about these times. For Alford's views, see 'The London Letterpress Printing Industry', Chapter V.

<sup>3</sup>See Cannon, 'The Social Situation of the Skilled Worker', Chapter, III.

<sup>4</sup>Members carried the ballot for affiliation by almost 6 votes to 1.

Federation. In 1898, the T.A. had overcome prejudice against politics sufficiently to resolve unanimously that the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. be instructed to give effect to the principle of establishing an eight-hour day by legislation. In 1900, the L.S.C. took a step unthinkable only a few years before, and affiliated to the Labour Representation Committee. The S.T.A. carried a ballot for affiliation in the same year.

But it is necessary to remember that the National Printing and Kindred Trades Federation remained 'a weak and shadowy affair', in which every union retained 'absolute autonomy';<sup>1</sup> and that although the S.T.A. carried the ballot for affiliation, the numbers voting were too small to permit the Association to act on the result. Even with these qualifications however it remains true that the typographical societies in the nineties each moved closer towards industrial tactics based on assumption of opposition of interest between employer and employee. As they did so, they showed even less inclination than they had before to refer their disputes to an independent arbitrator for settlement.

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#### Depression and the Labour Movement in Australia

The value of Australia's gross domestic production reached its nineteenth century peak in 1891.<sup>2</sup> In that year, the share per head of this production was £65.3; in four years this fell by a quarter, and did not recover its

<sup>1</sup> Musson, The Typographical Association, p.293.

<sup>2</sup> Butlin, Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing, p.460. Measured in constant prices, Australia's gross domestic production was in 1891 worth £211.6 million. By 1893, its value had fallen to £175.3 million.

1891 level until 1907.<sup>1</sup>

Even before the peak year had ended, about ten per cent of trade unionists had no job; within two years perhaps as many as thirty per cent of them were out of work, and even five years later the proportion of them unemployed was as high as at the end of 1891.<sup>2</sup> Unemployment among those who were not members of trade unions was probably far heavier, and for both groups times remained hard until well into the new century.<sup>3</sup> The unemployed migrated in thousands to New Zealand, South Africa, and the newly discovered goldfields of Western Australia.

The first few years of the nineties were marked not only by depression and unemployment, but by a strenuous and critical contest between trades unions and employers. In the spring of 1890, the Maritime Strike became the greatest industrial conflict the Australian colonies had ever seen. At its peak, it involved a total of 50,000 men in all capital cities except Perth, and before it was

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Calculated from Butlin, Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing, p.460, and Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Demography Bulletin, no.43, pp.2,3,5-7. The 1907 figure is £65.2.

<sup>2</sup>Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Labour Bulletin, no.5, p.10, and P.G. Macarthy, 'Wages and Employment Experience of Australian Wage Earners, 1891-1914', unpublished seminar paper, Department of Economic History, Australian National University, table VII and appendix, p.12. The Labour Bulletin quotes unemployment among trade unionists as 9.3 per cent in 1891 and 10.8 per cent in 1896. Macarthy cites unemployment among members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers as 28.3 per cent in 1893, and argues that this figure is generally applicable to the Australian work force.

<sup>3</sup>Labour Bulletin, no.4, p.10. 6.6. per cent of members of the 39 unions reporting unemployment were out of work at the end of 1901. At the end of 1906, 6.7 per cent of the members of the 47 reporting unions were unemployed.

over, the military had been called out in the three eastern colonies. When it was over, the unions had lost.

The strikers, their leaders, and the Press, saw the conflict as one between the forces of Labour and the forces of Capital. The issues which crowded out all others as the strike progressed was whether the 'closed shop' or 'freedom of contract' would prevail as the principle which governed the hiring of labour. By November 1890, 'freedom of contract' had won in all the capital cities, on the coalfields, and on all the station properties of the eastern colonies. It won again in the other Great Strikes that followed in the Queensland pastoral industry in 1891 and 1894.

This first defeat in the Maritime Strike consolidated the labour movement. The wholehearted collaboration of the Press, the clergy and the State with the employers inclined trade union leaders to see themselves more than ever before as the representatives of a working class oppressed by capitalists. This trend reinforced another. Before the Maritime Strike, unions (other than those in Brisbane) had been at best lukewarm about the representation of the labour movement by its own members in Parliament. Defeat largely removed these doubts. In N.S.W., Labour Electoral Leagues began to organize early in 1891; in Victoria, the Progressive Political League of Victoria resulted from a convention held later in the year; and in South Australia, the Adelaide Trades and Labour Council selected from among its own members candidates to contest the 1891 Legislative Council elections.

Of these three parties, that in N.S.W. was most closely connected with the trade union movement, most



clearly committed to the principle of social change, and (in terms of parliamentary performance) most successful. In Melbourne, the Trades Hall Council gave only grudging support to the Progressive Political League, and the League's policy was less committed to social change than the policy of the N.S.W. party. Still, in parliament, the League's representatives were, like the N.S.W. Labour representatives, sometimes able to exploit the tactic of 'support in return for concessions' on some quite important issues. In Adelaide, three of the men endorsed by the Trades and Labour Council were elected to the Legislative Council in 1891, and the United Labour Party succeeded in electing eight representatives to the Legislative Assembly in 1893. Despite its successes, the South Australian Labour Party was less influential than the others.

Outside parliament, the labour movement weakened almost to the point of disintegration. As depression deepened, the enthusiasm and militancy of 1891 ebbed. Unions involved in a struggle for their very survival cut themselves off from political controversy and practised the severest economies. In March 1893, the Sydney Trades and Labour Council decided that it would not notify the newspapers of future withdrawals of affiliated unions. After the Council re-organized itself as the Sydney District Council of the Australian Labour Federation in 1894, it was not able to induce more than a handful of unions to affiliate. Within a few years, the Australian Labour Federation itself was dead in the eastern colonies, and the hopes for national co-ordination of political and industrial labour were buried with it.

Only the strongest unions survived the nineties, and they entered the new century greatly weakened. Successful strikes were virtually impossible. For improvement in the conditions of their working life, trade unionists had to rely on an authority which could mediate between them and their employers. They therefore became interested in plans for the establishment of State Wages Boards and Courts of Arbitration. In the eighties, they had endorsed arbitration in principle, and avoided it when they were strong enough; it appeared now as the best available solution in time of distress.

#### The Depression and the Printing Industry in Australia

The typographical unions were very much part of this pattern of change in the labour movement because by the mid-nineties they probably had proportionately more members out of work than any other union. The first few years of the depression alone produced severe unemployment among compositors; but after 1894, a technical revolution eliminated the jobs of perhaps two-thirds of the daily newspaper compositors who had managed to stay in work.

The depression affected the jobbing trade most severely. There were 166 printing firms in Melbourne in 1890, and next year 99 more. Three years later, there were 70 fewer than there were in 1891, and the decline in the volume of work done was probably far greater than these figures suggest.<sup>1</sup> The jobbing trade in Sydney followed much the same pattern.<sup>2</sup>

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Sands and Macdougall, Melbourne Directories, 1890-94. A good many of these firms seem to have been back-yard establishments set up by unemployed journeymen. Their existence might well have been quite nominal. There is no way of establishing the number of dismissals made by larger firms.

2

John Sands, Sydney Directories, 1890-96. Of the 92 firms in business in 1891, only 50 survived in 1896.

Contraction in the newspaper industries of both cities was not so severe. After the collapse of the land boom, the papers lost pages of advertising, and by April 1891, the average daily issue of both the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age had fallen to 9.3 pages. In April 1894, the size of both papers was still about the same, and the Age, normally proud of its circulation, had stopped quoting figures. But these reductions in size and circulation did not result in the actual dismissal of many compositors; each man simply worked shorter hours.<sup>1</sup>

The money spent by the M.T.S. and the N.S.W.T.A. on their Unemployment Funds are the best indicators of unemployment among their members. In the six months ending at 30 June 1888, the M.T.S. paid out £18.<sup>2</sup> For the half-year ending 30 December 1890, it paid out £117,<sup>3</sup> and two years later £858 over the same period.<sup>4</sup> When the fund became liable for about the same amount in the next half-year, members voted to suspend unemployment payments.<sup>5</sup> The N.S.W.T.A.'s Fund was never called on to this extent but its payments almost tripled between 1891 and 1893.<sup>6</sup>

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In Sydney, daily newspapers employed 379 members of the N.S.W.T.A. in June 1890, and 355 in December 1893.

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A.T.J., vol.XIX, no.215, p.906.

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Ibid., vol.XXII, no.247, p.2109.

4

Ibid., vol.XXIV, no.272, p.2336.

5

Ibid., vol.XXIV, no.278, p.2389.

6

N.S.W.T.A. Half-Yearly Reports for the half-years ending 30 December 1889 and 30 December 1893. The amounts paid were £126 and £341. For a detailed comparison of unemployment among Society members in Sydney and Melbourne, see Appendix A.

It was to this degree of unemployment that the introduction of the Linotype machine added its effects.

The construction of a mechanical type-setting machine had interested inventors for almost two centuries before one that was commercially useful was finally built. Despite the efforts of well over a score of nineteenth century inventors (including such amateurs as Mark Twain and Guiseppe Mazzani), only three really practicable machines were ever produced: the Kastenbein, the Hattersley and the Thorne. The last was the best of them, and on straight matter would set about four times as fast as the average compositor.<sup>1</sup> But all of them broke down frequently; the lines they set had to be justified by hand; and after use, hand distribution of their type was necessary. It is doubtful whether they saved very much money in a newspaper office, and they provoked the typographical unions. As a result, their use in England was virtually confined to the provinces. In Australia, only two newspapers seemed to have had any truck with them before the depression of the nineties.<sup>2</sup>

The first Linotype machine imported into Australia was a Model One and the kind of work this machine could do was useful, but limited. Since it could set only three medium type-sizes from a single magazine of matrices, type of other sizes had to be inserted into the line by hand. Within a few years, the manufacturers had largely overcome this difficulty, and by 1898, the A.T.J. announced a machine that could 'operate with equal success on any size

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See the account of type-setting machines by Southward in the A.T.J., vol.XXI, no.239, p.2042.

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The only London newspaper to use them was The Times, a non-union shop. The two Australian newspapers were the Sydney Evening News (1887) and the Bendigo Independent (1891).

type from pearl up to pica and english'.<sup>1</sup>

As the machine improved, so did the operators. At its outset, the Linotype was reckoned to replace three to four hand compositors of average ability on solid setting.<sup>2</sup> But by mid-1897, the 'swifts' at the Argus were setting their 9,000 an hour, and at the Sydney Daily Telegraph, where they enjoyed the special advantages of carefully prepared copy and a wide measure, the 'cracks' were said to be rattling up 13,000.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the decade therefore one reasonably proficient operator could set more than six hand compositors of average ability in the same time. The saving in composition costs was enormous. The A.T.J. always claimed that installation of machines cut costs by two-thirds; writing to the Colonial Treasurer in 1902, the N.S.W. Government Printer claimed that 'mechanical means... reduce the costs of composition by fully fifty per cent'.<sup>4</sup> The cost of a new machine seems to have been about £1,250, but the Linotype Corporation made outright purchase unnecessary by developing a hiring scheme.

The Linotype was a godsend to Australian newspaper proprietors trying to cut costs in the depression of the nineties, and in less than five years, they were at work

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A.T.J., vol.XXVIII, no.333, p.5. Until a few years ago, there was a Model One machine still operating at the Launceston Examiner. It is now on view at the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, but because of modifications made to it during its working career, it is not a very good example of the original.

<sup>2</sup>For accounts of the working of the early Linotypes I am indebted to Mr. Les Cahill, President of the Victorian Branch, P.I.E.U.A., and to Mr. Edgar Baillie, who began his apprenticeship at the Melbourne Herald three years after the installation of the first machine, and later became superintendent of the composing room there. Standard rate for hand setting was about 1,000 lines an hour.

<sup>3</sup>A.T.J., vol.XXVII, no.323, p.6.

<sup>4</sup>Letter of 29 August 1902, Letter Book, N.S.W. State Archives. See Index 1/66.

on every capital city daily except, perhaps, two.<sup>1</sup> The Sydney Daily Telegraph had machines at work by April 1894; within a few months, the Sydney Evening News had installed its first two. By December, Linotypes were in Melbourne at Massina's office, and early in 1895 the Melbourne Herald installed a battery of eleven. By this time machines were in use at the Brisbane Courier, and the Launceston Examiner, and in the next year the Argus and the Age changed over to machine composition. In 1897 the Perth Morning Herald installed them, and in 1898 so did both the Adelaide dailies. By 1899 the machines had crossed the desert to Kalgoorlie.<sup>2</sup>

The march of the machines suddenly intensified the severe unemployment in an industry heavily based on newspapers. Dismissals seemed to have ranged between half to two-thirds of the composing staff. At the Sydney Daily Telegraph, the manager announced that he would be dismissing 50 men out of a staff of 74.<sup>3</sup> The old Age companionship was reduced from 120 to 44, from whom the final selection as Linotype operators was made.<sup>4</sup> At the Argus, a slightly smaller staff was reduced to twenty.<sup>5</sup>

For the men dismissed, there was scarcely a chance of another job. They could join the drifting army of 'casuals' looking for a day's setting in the jobbing offices, but as newspaper men they were at a disadvantage

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<sup>1</sup>Oddly enough, one of these was the Sydney Morning Herald which in December 1894 installed five Hattersley type-setting machines, and built its battery up to 20 in the next three years. The Brisbane Telegraph seems to have preferred Monolines to Linotypes.

<sup>2</sup>For accounts of the first installations of Linotype machines at the places referred to in this paragraph, see A.T.J., vol.XXV, no.286, p.2449, and no.287, p.2456; Vol.XXVI, no.298, p.2546, no.294, p.2516, no.301, p.2573, and no.297, p.2537; vol.XXVII, no.322, p.8, no.323, p.6 and no.325, p.5; vol.XXVIII, no.330, p.7; vol.XXX, no.346, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>A.T.J., vol.XXV, no.286, p.2449.

<sup>4</sup>A.T.J., vol.XXVII, no.323, p.4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.6.

in work of this kind. They could play the game of 'dodging the Lino' by saying good-bye to their wives and children, 'tramping it' round country towns and sending home some money every now and again. Or they could abandon their trade completely, head for the goldfields, or New Zealand, or South Africa, or compete with other workless tradesmen for some other kind of job.

The machine compositors who succeeded them succeeded also to their exalted position within the trade. Despite the depressed times, and in some ways even because of it, those who quickly became proficient at operating the Linotype machine had special advantages in bargaining.<sup>1</sup> Largely for this reason, they were inclined to bargain without the Societies' assistance. Even after Linotype machines had been installed in every colonial capital, the number of machine compositors was still small; but by then the Societies themselves were small affairs, and the machine compositor began to present special problems and exercise a distinctive and powerful influence.

#### The Melbourne Typographical Society

By the end of the eighties, the M.T.S. had come to regard the strike as a proper weapon in industrial bargaining, but its very success had limited the extent of the Society's co-operation with the labour movement. The first effect of the depression and the Great Strikes on the M.T.S. was to push it into closer alliance with other trade unions. After the outbreak of the Maritime

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The skilled Linotype operator's bargaining position was strengthened by the newspaper proprietor's desire to hold back editions as late as possible, and get the most out of each machine. A slow operator was not a real substitute for a fast one; thus the first newspaper machine composing agreements established Linotype operators as a privileged group, despite the huge number of compositors offering for the few jobs available.

Strike, a Special Meeting of 6 September resolved unanimously 'that a lump sum of £500 be placed at the service of the Finance and Control Committee of the Trades Hall Council' and unanimously went on to decide

that in the event of the continuance of the strike initiated by the shipowners and pastoralists throwing members of the Society out of employment, the Board of Management shall be empowered to render them such assistance as they may from time to time determine.

The M.T.S. does not seem to have been requested to call its members out, but they made a significant contribution to the strike by donating over £1400 to the strikers.<sup>1</sup> Six months later, in May 1891, 200 members at a Special General Meeting heard Mr McDonnell of the A.L.F. and a delegate from the Queensland Shearers' Union explain 'the facts of the Queensland Bush Unions' Dispute'. Only eight dissented from a motion to pay £50 down, and collect another £25 a week by a sixpenny levy.<sup>2</sup>

It was in these years that those who believed in the representation of labour in parliament scored their greatest successes. In October 1890 John Hancock and George Prendergast succeeded in forming a Parliamentary Elections Committee within the M.T.S.<sup>3</sup> The Committee distributed about 3,000 circulars and handbills through the printing trade, and added about 150 printers' names

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<sup>1</sup>The M.T.S. donated £1350 from levy, and individual collections by members added another £80.

<sup>2</sup>M.T.S. members earning over thirty shillings were still contributing to two earlier levies.

<sup>3</sup>Hancock had won Collingwood in 1891. It was not until seven months after the establishment of the Parliamentary Elections Committee within the M.T.S. that the Trades Hall Council began to organize a Political Labour Convention.



to the electoral rolls.<sup>1</sup> In his report on the Committee's work Prendergast wrote

Recent events will justify us in saying that if unionism is to hold its own, every man must have a vote, and we trust that the day is not far distant when unions will insist that every member, legally entitled, shall possess the franchise. It cannot be too forcibly brought under the notice of all workingmen the great power they possess, and the amount of good they can do for the advancement of the condition of labour at the ballot box by the exercise of that power.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Hancock was slogging away at the members through the editorial columns of the A.T.J. In February 1891, he used the dismissals at the Government Printing Office to underline the shortcomings of a Liberal Government. In June, he filled the front page with an account of the proceedings at Ballarat, whence the Seventh Intercolonial Trades and Labour Congress had called for the federation of all Australian labour unions, with the warning: 'If you want peace, prepare for war!'

But as time went on, it became apparent that Hancock and Prendergast could not carry the Society with them. In May 1891, the Age Chapel (the largest in Melbourne) attempted to censure Hancock for his reference to their paper as a 'fallen democratic authority' and his use of the A.T.J. for 'political purposes'. When the President, Mr Field, approached the Board for assistance to the Progressive Political League in March, 1892, he got a working committee, but no donation. When Prendergast made the same approach in 1893, it was made clear to him that while individuals may well contribute, the Society

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XXI, no.245, p.2093.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. XXII, no.246, p.2099.

as such would give nothing; and the Board re-affirmed this principle in 1894.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Hancock still thundered through the columns of the A.T.J. Just before the elections of 1894, he wrote

The rapid growth of Socialism is not solely to be attributed to the efforts of any body of men in particular, although there have been many zealous workers in the cause; but people all over the world have recognized the fact that their lot is getting harder year after year, and they have seized with avidity upon any scheme that has held out promise of comfort for all. Trade unionists must throw in their lot with the masses...<sup>2</sup>

In April, he warned that the good-as-labour men of the Liberal party were not good enough. But by this time, it is very doubtful if many were heeding.

It would scarcely have been even a crumb of consolation to Prendergast and Hancock that part of their failure to fire enthusiasm within the M.T.S. for the parliamentary representation of labour was due to the inability of the Progressive Political League to grow into anything like an effective body. Its main trouble was lack of interest by the Trades Hall Council, which regarded itself as a body representative of craft unions, but certainly not of a working class. Its contacts with the 'new' unions were far less than those of the Trades Halls in Sydney and Brisbane, and it refused to allow them representation that took much account of their size. This helps to account for its failure even to receive the Report of the Ballarat Conference of the A.L.F. until six months after it was

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<sup>1</sup>

M.T.S. Minutes, 20 May 1893 and 21 July 1894.

<sup>2</sup>

A.T.J., vol.XXV, no.284, p.2434.

issued.<sup>1</sup> The Progressive Political League was always weak in organization, and took great trouble to minimize differences between itself and the Liberal Party. The United Labour Party of Victoria, born out of the League in 1894, inherited these characteristics of its parent. Hancock and Prendergast had therefore to contend with this confusing question: why risk factionalism within the M.T.S. by seeking to involve it in the support of a labour party when members could get the same kind of representation by voting for the Liberal Party?

But if Hancock was unable to convince most of his members that they should support a labour party, this does not mean that his assumption of opposing class interest was not shared by members at all. Nowhere is this clearer than in the M.T.S.'s continued rejection in this period of schemes of conciliation, despite frequent protestations of 'cordial friendship' with the Master Printers' Association. When the Trades Hall Council sought the adherence of the M.T.S. to its scheme of conciliation the Society was content to let the A.T.U. refuse on its behalf.<sup>2</sup> When the Argus offered to submit a dispute on the changing of standing matter to arbitration, the Board refused.<sup>3</sup> Apparently it was by this time pretty much in agreement with John Hancock's assessment that 'the sole mission of the employers' organization is to reduce

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<sup>1</sup> On the relations between the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and parliamentary labour groups, see R.A. Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics, pp.139-144 and S.M. Ingham, 'Some Aspects of Victorian Liberalism, 1880-1900', M.A. thesis, Melbourne, 1949, chapter Vii.

<sup>2</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 19 March 1892.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 24 November 1894.

wages.'<sup>1</sup>

By mid-1894, the M.T.S. had known close on five years of deepening depression. It was short of money, and its membership was down by over a third on 1890 figures. But those who remained were vigorous, and had taken the lesson of the strikes very much to heart. On Eight Hours Day, 1894, a day of drenching rain,

Nearly four hundred good and true printers marched to the inspiring and appropriate air of 'Comrades' played with vigour and taste by the Age band...(They made a) liberal distribution of literature of an educating and decidedly advanced character.<sup>2</sup>

Then came the machines. By the end of 1896, the three dailies were being set almost entirely by Linotype. The machines began to spread through the jobbing offices, reducing further as they went the displaced hand-compositor's slim chance of a day's casual employment.

The M.T.S. had no way of dealing with them. When their introduction was only a few months away, the best the A.T.J. could suggest was that compositors should pool their resources, buy up the machines, and exploit them before the tables were turned. It advanced no alternative plan for two years; then John Hancock persuaded a Special General Meeting to carry a motion for the establishment of a third morning daily.<sup>3</sup> Next month, the A.T.J. explained that such a paper would serve more than one purpose:

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<sup>1</sup>

A.T.J., vol.XXV, no.287, p.2460.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., vol.XXV, no.287, p.2461.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., vol.XXVII, no.312, p.2661.

Garbled, mutilated and generally inaccurate reports of the public utterances of public men are published daily...this is not produced by defective or careless reporting, but is simply the result of a mandate from the power behind the throne that this man or that section of the community must be discredited in the eyes of the general public. Appeals to the tyrants' spirit of fair play are useless...It is an established maxim that it is no use attempting to fight the press, as the enemy carries too many guns, has neither bowels of compassion, pangs of conscience, nor a soul to be damned, and always has the invaluable privilege of having the last word...Friends and well-wishers must remember that (the new paper) is being started by poor men; that the enemy is rich and unscrupulous; that reprisals have already been resorted to; and that the efforts of many earnest workers are being cramped by a system of veiled terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

But the ambition which combined the establishment of a working-class paper with the provision of work for the unemployed outstripped the capacity of the promoters to raise cash. The time when morning dailies could be successfully operated by men of small capital was well past by the nineties, and the great scheme was never launched. Other co-operatives, less spectacularly announced, seemed to have shared the same fate.<sup>2</sup>

With no new ventures to employ even some of those displaced by the machines, membership of the M.T.S. slumped badly. The Report for the half-year ended 30 December 1896 showed that income from subscriptions had fallen to half the corresponding figure for 1890. As members continued to leave Melbourne in large numbers

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol.XXVII, no.313, p.2668.

<sup>2</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 22 August 1896. Names of new firms in Sands and Macdougall's Directory suggest the formation of a few jobbing co-operatives, and for a while a struggling paper called the Evening News was so organized.

over the next few months those that remained addressed themselves to the matter of the Society's survival. The Board of Management's Report at the Half-Yearly Meeting of 1897 detailed their methods of retrenchment:

So heavily did the amount for Emigration Fees increase (£153 in three months) that your Board had to suspend the operation of the rule in compliance with another rule dealing with your funds, which prohibited the payment of any more money under that heading until the Society's funds had reached the sum of £500. The maximum Mortality Allowance was reduced from £37 to £30 and eventually to £25. The amount for clerical work of the office was reduced from £4.10.0. to £3.10.0. per week, and the members of the Board voluntarily gave up their attendance fees. The last of the items of the retrenchment was the severing of the Society's connection with the Australian Typographical Journal, which was taken over by the Council of the Australian Typographical Union, under whose auspices it now runs.<sup>1</sup>

These drastic economies alone kept the Society solvent. Income from subscriptions continued to drop until mid-1899, when they yielded only £330 during the half-year. At this point, the Society's membership was probably less than half that what it was in 1890, and its income something a good deal less than that fraction.

Under these circumstances, the M.T.S. as a Society was not in a very strong bargaining position to regulate the working of the new machines. Provisionally in February 1895, it adopted the working rules suggested by the A.T.U. Conference of the previous year, and invited the M.P.A. to confer. The Masters declined. It revised these Rules in the Spring of 1896, and again invited conference. Once more, the M.P.A. refused. Once more, the M.T.S. revised the rules.

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 7 August 1897.

This third version retained most of the principles of the other two. It insisted that machine operators be journeymen members of the Society. It added a schedule of payment for penalty matter on the basis of the old newspaper scale. But it no longer attempted to fix minimum and maximum hours of composition, and it abandoned its insistence that all machines be worked on time. Instead, it recommended that they be worked at a minimum piece rate of 4d. per thousand ens from 1 December 1896.<sup>1</sup>

Still the M.P.A. refused to discuss terms. When 4d. a thousand was still not being paid on Christmas Eve, the men at the Herald came out for the day.<sup>2</sup> The Masters then agreed to a conference, but a sudden strike was not a trick to be tried twice, and the Masters deferred the meeting with impunity. By March, the M.T.S. was prepared to accept 3d. a thousand, and still there was no conference on the other conditions. It was not until a year later that the M.T.S. succeeded in reaching agreement with the M.P.A., and even then the exact terms of settlement are not clear.<sup>3</sup>

If the M.T.S. had been so enfeebled in the morning dailies, its control of the jobbing trade (outside a few large offices) was probably non-existent. By 1897, only 18 offices were contributing subscriptions, compared with 30 in 1890. In 1890, casuals contributed £230; in 1897,

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A.T.J., vol.XXVII, no.317, p.2700. This was essentially a newspaper agreement, and did not intend to cover the one or two machines in commercial work.

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M.T.S. Minutes, 6 February 1897.

3

A.T.J., vol.XXCIII, no.332, p.7. Since there is no further revision of rules, it is likely that the Society succeeded in having its working conditions accepted.

they apparently contributed nothing. There were reports of members offering to work for a pound a week under Society rates, 'rebating' part of their wages to their employer, working for nothing to learn the Linotype machine, or even offering to pay the employer for the privilege.<sup>1</sup> The absence of comment on the employment of boys can only be taken to mean that control of this problem was considered to be beyond the bounds of possibility; or that proprietors could find men who would work for boys' wages.

The first glimmer of hope for the M.T.S. came with the passage of the Victorian Factory and Shops Act of 1896. Far from leading the campaign for the Act as it had in the eighties, the M.T.S. this time had taken no part in it at all, but certain of the Act's provisions were to prove valuable to it nevertheless. Besides specifying minimum conditions of health and safety in some industries, the Act took the remarkable step of providing for the establishment of wage-fixing tribunals in the clothing, furniture, baking, and butchery trades. These Wages Boards were to be of four to ten members, half being representatives of employers, and half of the employees, who together were to elect a chairman. If they failed to agree on the election of a chairman, then the Governor in Council had power to appoint one. The framers of the Act had provided for its extension to other industries by clauses providing for the establishment of additional boards on the resolution of either House of Parliament.

It was in this last provision that some members of the M.T.S. saw their chance. In March 1898, the A.T.J. (no longer edited by John Hancock) began to advance again

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Ibid., vol. XXIX, no. 341, p. 11 and M.T.S. Minutes, 20 July 1895 and 15 May 1897.



an old argument scarcely heard by Society members in a dozen years. It remarked that it was strange that no attempt had been made in the mutual interests of employees and the fair employer to have the Shops and Factories Act applied to the printing trade.

Nearly the whole of the better houses are manned by members of the Melbourne Typographical Society, which exacts a fair remuneration for labour given, but there are many firms which keep as far as possible outside the pale of the fair terms subscribed to by the Master Printers and the Melbourne Typographical Society. Thus it is that one section of the printing trade is enabled to hold an advantage over that section which keeps within the bounds of fairness. If the Victorian Master Printers' Association and the Melbourne Typographical Society made a move to the Trade, much advantage would be gained by these two bodies, and a corresponding disadvantage placed upon these houses which at present are able to undercut by employing boy and underpaid labour.<sup>1</sup>

The initiative for the setting-up of a Wages Board for the printing industry came not from the men, but from the masters.<sup>2</sup> At the first meeting with representatives of the MP.A. on the subject, some Society delegates declared that masters only sought a Wages Board as a means of reducing the current rate.<sup>3</sup> But the M.T.S. was scarcely in a position to refuse any proffered hand of friendship, and masters and men made joint petition for the extension of the Wages Board system to the printing

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., vol.XXVIII, no.333, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 24 March 1900. Varley Brothers offered to print 10,000 copies of the Fair List free when it was brought up to date.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1899, Mr Cock suggested that the employers give a written guarantee that this was not their intention.

\* After the word 'move' should be added the words:

"in having the Shops and Factories Act applied"

trade.<sup>1</sup> Their petition was successful, and on the eve of the new century, the M.T.S. was electing its Wages Board delegates.<sup>2</sup>

By this time, those trade unions that had survived were making a slow recovery, and in July 1900 the M.T.S. was confident enough to publish its first balance sheet since 1897, which showed that income from subscriptions was up by £65 over the corresponding period of 1899. Henceforth, membership increased steadily. Some at least, of its new members, the Society owed to the Factory Act and its friends among the employers.

But ten years of depression and technological revolution had left their mark on this Society that was slowly climbing to its feet in 1900. It had forsaken its interest in schemes for the federation of all Australian unions; no longer did it show the slightest glimmer of interest in the representation of a working class in parliament; for the theory of opposition between employer and employee it again substituted the doctrines of co-operation and arbitration. John Hancock died in 1899, but in his own union the machines had killed even before that the ideas for which he stood.

#### The New South Wales Typographical Association

In Sydney, the effect of the depression on employment in the printing industry was not nearly so severe as in Melbourne. 1891 and 1893 both gave some hope of recovery, and in the first half of the latter year, the N.S.W.T.A.

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The 'Application by the Printing Trade for a Special Board for Letterpress Printing' gave as its first reason for seeking a Board 'the unjust handicap fair minded employers labour under owing to an undue proportion of boys not apprentices being employed in many of the printing houses in the city and suburbs.' The Application is held by the Department of Labour and Industry, Melbourne.

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M.T.S. Minutes, 19 May 1900 and 6 October 1900.

had to spend less than half as much on unemployment relief as the M.T.S.<sup>1</sup>

In these circumstances, militancy was more pronounced in Sydney, and lasted longer. Altogether members contributed more than £2,000 to the Maritime Strike Funds and Charles Jones, the Secretary, wrote in the A.T.J.

Now we know that the rank and file are capable of being true and firm under any conditions that may arise, and that the spirit which actuates the navvy or the hod-carrier is the same as that which impels the comp. or the carpenter to be in eternal unity - the bonds of their common brotherhood are around them all and capitalism may put a tight strain upon the iron links, but will never break them.<sup>2</sup>

Although not quite so sure about the affinity between skilled and unskilled, the President, Mr T.W. Plummer, considered that it was only a matter of a year or two before a 'scab' or a 'blackleg' would be a thing of the past, and went off to the Ballarat Intercolonial Trade Union Conference to contribute what he could to its plan to federate Australian labour.<sup>3</sup> In 1891, the N.S.W.T.A.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup>

A.T.J., vol.XXI, no.245, p.2089.  
Charles Jones: Born Buckinghamshire; took part in the Chartist movement; emigrated to U.S.A. 1847, and worked as a whaler; emigrated to Australia, 1853, and was prominent in the Red Ribbon Movement at Bendigo; elected as member of Bendigo Mining Court; became editor of the Colac Observer and later the Maldon Herald; founded the Internationalist, and when that failed, joined with E.W. O'Sullivan and others in establishing a co-operative evening paper in Melbourne; went to Tasmania, and then in 1874 to N.S.W., where he was a foundation member of the Radical Association, the Democratic Alliance, and the Australian Republican League; N.S.W.T.A. delegate, Trades and Labour Council, 1887-93; Secretary, N.S.W.T.A. 1889-1893; died 24 January 1893.

<sup>3</sup>

Board of Management Report for the year ending 30 December 1890, and N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 24 January 1891.

members raised over £300 for the Queensland shearers by imposing a levy on their earnings, and circulated petitions for the release of imprisoned Queensland bush workers. At a specially-called meeting to consider the Ballarat scheme for the federation of labour, the News Vice-President, Mr Dyson, warned that the capitalists were organizing more quickly than labour,<sup>1</sup> and in the following year the Association donated £400 to the locked-out miners at Broken Hill.

But by this time, it was clear that organized labour was not going to recover the strength it lost during the Maritime Strike for some time to come. As depression deepened, unions withdrew their affiliation from the Trades and Labour Council, so that of the 85 affiliated at the end of 1890, less than 30 remained at the end of 1893. Within the N.S.W.T.A, the vogue for militancy also passed. Even as early as November 1891, at the meeting to discuss the federation of labour, Mr Dyson had to comment on 'the paucity of attendance'. The Ballarat scheme was not implemented in Sydney until 1894, when the ailing Trades and Labour Council made way for the Sydney District Council of the Eastern Province. But then only nine unions would affiliate, and the N.S.W.T.A. was not one of these.

Enthusiasm for the Labor Electoral Leagues waned even more quickly. In 1890, the N.S.W.T.A. had shown a cautious approval of the Trades and Labour Council's plans for the direct representation of labour in parliament. At the 1891 elections, the Labor Electoral Leagues scored a brilliant success. Three of the craft - Houghton, Sharp and Fitzgerald - were elected as Labor members, and two others, Higgs and Dyson fought the good fight without success. T.W. Plummer moved the Association's congratulations

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<sup>1</sup> N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 21 November 1891

upon the success which had attended their efforts to have the workers directly represented in the Parliament of New South Wales, the result of which must be the advancement of the cause of trades unionism and the alleviation of distress and other disabilities among the masses generally, caused to a great extent by the one-sided legislation and political patronage of the past.<sup>1</sup>

Yet only a month later a motion of confidence in the Labor Party was defeated by an amendment for the adjournment, and after that, there is no record of any discussion of Labor parliamentary politics for years. It seems a good guess that the N.S.W.T.A. was frightened off by the haggling among Labour M.'s L.A. over their stand on the fiscal issue, the brawl between the members and the Leagues over the signing of the pledge, and the battle between the Leagues and the Trades and Labour Council over the control of the parliamentary movement. Involvement in parliamentary politics was too risky, and the trades union movement was failing rapidly. When the Linotype machines arrived in Sydney, the Association had to face them alone.

On 17 March 1894 Mr Watkin Wynne, the manager of the Daily Telegraph, sent for a deputation from the Chapel and told them that twelve Linotypes were about to arrive. The Board of Management hastened to put its claims before him. Mr. Wynne replied:

Mr. E.H. Hurley,  
Secretary, N.S.W. Typographical Association...

Dear Sir - I beg to acknowledge yours of the 27th instant suggesting what you think we should pay our compositors when working the Linotype (sic) Machines. In reply I beg to state that we intend to treat fairly with the members of our staff and that we hope to be able to manage with them without the intervention of your Association.

I am, Dear Sir,  
Yours faithfully....<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 27 June 1891.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2 April 1894.

Mr Wynne required prospective staff to sign one document in which they declared they would not join a trades union, and another in which they bound themselves in the sum of £50 not to leave the employment of the Daily Telegraph for two years.

The Management had however misjudged the N.S.W.T.A. A threatened strike forced Mr Wynne to a conference which became the first of the series that produced Australia's first machine composing agreement.<sup>1</sup> It provided for a piece rate of 3d. per thousand ens for proficient operators, and introduced the idea of a guaranteed minimum wage which the House would make up if hours of composition were too short. It guaranteed that operators would not be required to make up their time on outside work, and it provided for the transference of some hand penalty rates to machine setting. There was no bond, and no 'Document' that prohibited them from joining a trade union.

The Association had sacrificed its determination that the machines should be worked on time rates, and in its ignorance of the working of the machines it had allowed the standard of proficiency to be set too high.<sup>2</sup> But it had prevented the establishment of a non-union shop, guaranteed a reasonable income for the operators-to-be, and preserved the Association's right to bargain collectively on behalf of its members. The rapid fall from power of the N.S.W.T.A. dates not from the introduction of the Linotype, but from the failure of the 1894 strike in the jobbing trade.

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1

This Agreement is reproduced in Appendix B. For a detailed account of the negotiations, see N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 17 March 1894 to 5 May 1894.

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This was 7,000 ens of corrected matter. It is likely, of course, that Mr Wynne also had no real appreciation of what he could expect from the machines.

Through the autumn and winter of 1894 there had been some ominous signs. Several small shops attempted to reduce the minimum wage of £3 a week for compositors, and workers in the weakly-organized kindred trades suffered a reduction. The fifty hand-compositors sacked from the Daily Telegraph swelled the unemployed, and when Maclardy's cut the wages of their two journeymen they resigned from the Association rather than leave.<sup>1</sup> In August, McCarron, Stewart and Co. announced a reduction in time rates from £3 to £2.14s. The association companionship of eleven came out, and thirteen 'rats' immediately went in. McCarron, Stewart referred the dispute to the Master Printers' Association, who in conference with Association delegates made an offer of a reduction to £2.10.<sup>2</sup>

By this time, it was mid-September, and members of the M.P.A. had begun to offer £2.12s. to those of their employees willing to sign individual agreements.<sup>3</sup> The Association forbade its members to sign, and after a ballot of the trade offered to settle for a minimum wage of £2.16. When the M.P.A. did not reply, it instructed Association members to cease work at the end of the financial week, and about 100 or 120 in the M.P.A.'s offices did so.<sup>4</sup>

The Association levied its working members heavily, and asked for help from the A.T.U. But with the printing trade in other cities depressed, the A.T.U. itself was short of money, and the N.S.W.T.A. had to gamble on a

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<sup>1</sup> N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 7 July 1894.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 18 August 1894

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 22 September 1894.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3 October 1894 and A.T.J., vol.XXVI, no.297 p.2542.

heavy seasonal increase of work. By the end of October it was plain that this was not forthcoming, and the M.P.A. was getting enough labour through its bureaux in Sydney and Melbourne to be able to carry on. In the second week in November, the Strike Executive Committee had to defer strike pay and unemployment relief; next week, it had only half the amount due. The Board of Management invited the A.T.U. to intervene and settle the dispute. One of the terms the M.P.A. demanded was the admission into the N.S.W.T.A. without penalty of all those hands taken on since the strike began. This the N.S.W.T.A. refused, but reluctantly sent the A.T.U. delegation back to make what terms it could. On 19 November it declared the strike off and members returned to work at £2.12s.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the M.P.A. finally insisted on the admission of 'rats' into the Association is not clear, but it scarcely matters. The Association was bankrupt and broken. It had spent £1,216 on strike pay, and nearly £600 in unemployment relief over the period of the strike. Its income from subscriptions had fallen by £200 in the second half of 1894.<sup>2</sup> The number of out-of-work compositors in Sydney had increased by more than 100, and as the Association was forced to cancel even those meagre arrangements it provided for the unemployed, the loyalty of these hungry men depended on sentiment alone. The 'closed shops' became a thing of the past. Only one firm

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1

Ibid., 3 October 1894 to 19 November 1894, and A.T.J., vol.XXVI, no.297, p.2524.

2

When compared with the same period in 1893.



took back all the union men it had employed before the strike.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the strike, the Association had lost more than 60 members. Two Sydney dailies took quick advantage of this distress. The Evening News sacked its companionship of 60, and took on another more to its liking in which only half of the original members found a place. The Sydney Morning Herald announced that it intended employing girls to do the distribution for the Hattersley machine, and the Association could only express its hope that it would not introduce them into the composing room proper.<sup>2</sup>

From early in 1895, membership and income fell steadily. By the beginning of 1896, effective membership was only about half what it had been two years previously. By the end of 1899, there were about 375 members of the Association compared with about 1,100 ten years before. In the hope of providing some relief for its unemployed, the Association disinterred all the hoary old schemes for newspaper co-operatives and land settlement and then re-buried them after inspection. For those in work, nominal wages remained the same, but in practice something less was often paid.<sup>3</sup>

After the defeat of 1894, the N.S.W.T.A. lost all enthusiasm for militancy, but it did not despair as much as the Melbourne Society. Instead, it worked energetically at

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Report of the (Strike) Executive Committee, N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 24 November 1894 to 5 January 1895. The Association alleged that 90 'rats' and 60 'seceders' were taken on to do the work originally done by 120 of its members.

2

N.S.W.T.A. Half-Yearly Report, 31 December 1894 and 1 December 1894.

3

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 26 September 1896. Sometimes employers paid well under the M.P.A.'s minimums and sometimes members offered to work for less. The companionship of the Australian Star agreed to a rebate, and the compositors at the Sunday Times accepted time rates instead of piece.

its survival. It resurrected its Fair List, poor pathetic ghost of earlier days, and canvassed employers for their placement on it. The only qualification now necessary was that they pay all their employees not less than the M.P.A.'s minimum of £2.12., but even so the List scarcely increased until 1899. The Association had about as much success with its membership campaigns but in one way at least it did some important work.

By 1897, it was clear that machine compositors were drifting away from membership. In September, the Executive, noticing that 'the Daily Telegraph was practically a non-union office' and perhaps sensing the formation of a rival union, decided on calling a special meeting of Linotype operators.<sup>1</sup> Despite some suggestions for forming a quasi-independent body, the meeting resolved to set up a Machine Composition Section firmly under the control of the Executive.<sup>2</sup> The Section succeeded in recruiting several non-union operators, and two years later, when the question of putting apprentices on the Linotypes first arose, the Association was strong enough to compel the transference of the old hand-composing ratio to machine composing and insist on severe restrictions being placed on the use of machines by apprentices.<sup>3</sup>

It was also in this period that the N.S.W.T.A. succeeded in establishing a permanent organization for those other workers in the printing industry whom technical change and industrial expansion had made more numerous. These were the bookbinders, paper rulers, letterpress machinists, stereotypers, lithographers and lithographic artists, people who often harboured a good deal of distrust for the compositor

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1897.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>3</sup> N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 5 August 1899.

and his union.<sup>1</sup> These men of the 'kindred trades' had organized themselves into unions, which (with the exception of the Bookbinders' Union) were small, unstable, and unrepresentative. By April 1890, the bookbinders and paper rulers were grouped together in one union, and the pressmen and stereotypers in another. There was a separate Lithographers' Society, and a body which called itself the Association of Graphic Artists.

In the enthusiastic year that followed the Maritime Strike, these unions, with the aid of the Trades and Labour Council had formed a Printing and Kindred Trades Committee, and by the end of the year the N.S.W.T.A. had agreed to join.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, when this body had atrophied, the N.S.W.T.A. set to work to revive it. The new Printing Trades Kindred Committee got as far as drawing up a constitution which proclaimed that its first objective was

to organize every worker in the printing trades into a solid compact body, to abolish sectional jealousies and differences among the workers and to endeavour to bring about a Federation of the whole of the workers in the (kindred) trades. <sup>3</sup>

But this aim for the time being got no nearer fulfilment than its statement on paper, since the organization once more lapsed.

The N.S.W.T.A. contemplated trying to revive the combined body once more during the 1894 strike, and in

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One of the most frequent causes of dispute between letterpress machinists and compositors was the practice of 'twicing', i.e., compositors working at both case and press. Compositors also had long tended to look upon stereotypers as being responsible for the loss of 'fat' from re-print.

<sup>2</sup>A.T.J., vol.22, no.257, p.2199.

<sup>3</sup>N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 15 April 1893.

April of the following year gladly accepted the invitation of the Bookbinders to discuss ways and means of taking the kindred trades in hand. The outcome of a series of meetings was the inauguration of a Printing Trades Federation Council in February 1896, whose aims were identical with those of the old body. The Council held a series of successful Smoke Concerts, built up its own Fair List, and made arrangements for marching in the Eight Hours Procession. Although it failed to achieve the strengthening of the weakest component unions,<sup>1</sup> this time the Printing Trades Council endured.

Besides undertaking organizing work among the kindred trades, the Association began to exploit opportunities that arose in parliamentary politics. Despite its fear of party involvement and lack of formal contact with the Labor Leagues, the Board of Management did not hesitate to use the influence of its old members in lobbying the government. Thus early in 1896 E.W. O'Sullivan introduced a deputation to the Postmaster-General to discuss the importation of printed supplements.<sup>2</sup> Six months later, the Association finally succeeded in extracting from the Minister for Public Instruction (via Messrs Hogue, O'Sullivan and Watson M.'s L.A.) that, all other things being equal, school books used in the public schools would be printed in the colony.<sup>3</sup> But the Association's greatest interest in the 1896 parliament was in the passage of a Factory Act.

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 4 November 1899. It was reported to the Board that the Letterpress Machinists' Union did not have one financial member.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 7 March 1896.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., 5 September 1896.

As in Melbourne in the eighties, compositors were not interested nearly so much in the ability of a Factory Act to regulate health and safety as in its power to prohibit juvenile employment. In introducing the subject to the Board, Mr R.G. Hogarth, Chairman of the A.T.U. Council, said:

There was no doubt that an excessive amount of juvenile labour was now employed by the printing trade, which, together with the introduction of type-setting and line-casting machines, was lessening the field of work for journeymen to a serious extent. The (A.T.U.) Conference had arrived at a conclusion that the best way to deal with this question was to approach the Government and have a Factory Act introduced.<sup>1</sup>

The Board appointed a Committee which received help from Labour M.'s L.A., and from the Sydney District Committee of the Australian Labour Federation, although at the time the Association was not an affiliated union. At the Half-Yearly General Meeting, the Board reported that the Committee's labours had been much assisted by the introduction of a Factory and Workshops Bill by the Minister for Labour and Industry, Jacob Garrard. The Committee itself presented a Report setting out amendments that J.C. Watson agreed to introduce at the second reading.

Two of these in particular were ingenious attempts to restrict the operation of Linotype machines by provisions designed to protect the health of the operator. Amendment 'A' read:

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 7 March 1896.

No person shall be employed at any manufacturing process or machine where the danger of lead poisoning exists from fumes of molten lead or any combination therewith, for more than seven hours between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., or for more than six hours between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.; and no person shall be employed for more than forty-two hours for day work per week, and thirty-six hours per week for night work within the hours as above specified...

Amendment 'D' proposed to exclude any person under eighteen years from any manufacturing process which involved the casting of molten lead.<sup>1</sup>

The Bill was passed without benefit of these amendments. Apart from limiting to 48 each week the number of hours that could be worked in factories by males under eighteen and by all females, it did nothing to restrict the right of employers to employ boy labour when and on what tasks they wished. It was far more concerned with establishing minimum standards of health and safety. The N.S.W.T.A. made some use of these regulations<sup>2</sup> but by this time the 1896 amendments to the Victorian Factories and Shops Act were providing its members with food for thought. Speaking at the Sixth Triennial Conference of the A.T.U. in 1898, the President of the N.S.W.T.A., Mr George Jones, moved

That it is desirable that a minimum weekly wage for skilled journeymen, for 48 hours per week should be legalized by Act of Parliament, and that affiliated unions be requested to make every endeavour to secure the incorporation of the same in the Factories and Shops Acts in the in the various colonies.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Report of the Committee on Factory Legislation, N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 16 July 1896.

<sup>2</sup>

E.G., see N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 2 April and 7 May 1898.

<sup>3</sup>

A.T.J., vol.XXIX, no.341, p.11.

Five days earlier, the Board had determined to send Mr Jones as a delegate to a Conference sponsored by the Sydney District Council of the Australian Labour Federation, with which it had affiliated earlier in the year.<sup>1</sup> The Conference was to discuss, among other things, the provision of a wages board, and a court of compulsory arbitration, and it decided to press for both. From the end of 1898 the N.S.W.T.A. committed itself to the campaign for legislative regulation of those matters that previously it had preferred to settle by direct negotiation and passage of arms.

By this time the parliamentary Labor Party had succeeded in putting its house in order. The contest over control of the parliamentary party between the Trades and Labour Council (and its successor, the Sydney District Council) and the Labour Electoral Leagues had been largely resolved at the Conference of 1895, which in May of that year established a new body, the Political Labor League.<sup>2</sup> From 1895 the Labour vote steadily increased, and the party in Parliament made a reality out of the old slogan, 'concessions in return for support'.<sup>3</sup> In July, the Board of Management received a letter inviting it to send a

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NS.W.T.A. Minutes, 29 January 1898.

2

On the significance of the 1895 Conference see N.B. Nairn, 'Some Aspects of the Development of the Labor Movement in N.S.W., 1870-1900', unpublished M.A. thesis, Sydney, 1955, pp.298-305.

3

Between 1895 and 1899, Premier George Reid depended on Labor votes to keep him in office. This may account for much of the success of the N.S.W.T.A. deputations to Ministers in 1896, and have something to do with the exclusion of Linotype machines from the Government Printing Office, despite repeated requests from the Government Printer for their provision. See Index to Letter Book, Treasury; 1/66 State Archives, letters on the Estimates for 1902.

delegate to Political Labor League Conferences. Accordingly, it put before the Half-Yearly General Meeting two motions for consideration: one for the acceptance of the Political Labor League's platform, and the other for representation at P.L.L. Conferences. In the debate, Mr Hogarth said that he

was opposed previously to the proposition, but since the fiscal question would shortly be dealt with under Federation, he would support it. We should...go bald-headed for labour politics, and we would be doing the right thing to pass it at once.

The President, Mr George Jones, said:

This was the first attempt to take the Association into politics; if the proposition was accepted, it would probably become further advanced, and the members take a keener interest in political questions which immediately affected their interests. The planks of the labour platform could be amended; and he thought in view of movements taking place in England and the other colonies by trade unions on political matters, it would be wise to take this step. <sup>1</sup>

Both propositions were adopted. The campaign for a compulsory arbitration act which followed became the means of cementing the alliance between the N.S.W.T.A. and the Political Labor League.

Early in 1900, George Jones moved in the Sydney Labor Council a motion to petition Parliament for a compulsory arbitration act. The Council carried the motion and resolved to circulate the petition among the various trade unions.<sup>2</sup> In June, 1901, B.R. Wise

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<sup>1</sup>

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes 29 July 1899.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 3 March 1900



moved the first reading of the bill that was eventually to become N.S.W.'s first compulsory arbitration act. The Board scanned the bill, discovered that the Government Printing Office seemed to be exempt from its provisions, and decided to send a deputation of five to interview the Labor Party.<sup>1</sup> This deputation met a caucus delegation consisting of J.S.T. McGowen, J.C. Watson, and A. Griffith, and it was agreed that J.C. Watson would move the extension of the Bill's provisions to the Government Printing Office when the House went into Committee.<sup>2</sup> The Assembly passed the Bill, but it was thrown out in Council. The Board sent notice of its regret to both the Premier and the Political Labor League, together with a request for the re-introduction of the Bill at the next session.

The Government duly re-introduced the Bill, and the N.S.W.T.A. watched its progress closely. At the Board meeting of 2 November 1901, the Secretary reported that the Council had rejected the clause which empowered the Court to direct that members of an industrial union should be employed in preference to other persons, other things being equal. Mr George Jones moved and the Board resolved that the Board protests

- I Against the Legislative Council's amendment of the Industrial Arbitration Bill by the striking out of (the preference clause).
- II Also against the limitation of the duration of the term of an arbitrator to three years

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid., 4 August 1900.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid., 1 September 1900.

2. That the Board respectfully urge upon the Labor Party the serious consideration of the desirability of rejecting the Industrial Arbitration Bill altogether unless the essentials embraced in the foregoing resolutions, Sections I & II, be included in the Bill.<sup>1</sup>

A month later, Mr Jones reported that

a deputation from the Political Labor League had waited on members of the Labor Party at Parliament House...with reference to insisting on the amendments as proposed being inserted... The Attorney-General (Mr Wise) by some means was in attendance, and strongly urged the withdrawal of the amendments and all opposition to the Legislative Council's action; if the course was insisted on he was convinced the Government would be beaten in the Council and the Bill lost. The Labor Party were also afraid of losing the Bill if the Legislative Council's amendment were disagreed with. The deputation however assured the Party of the support of all trade unionists, and the little use the Bill would be if allowed to pass as emasculated by the Legislative Council. Ultimately a caucus (sic) meeting of the Labor Party was held and it was resolved to oppose the Council's amendments and insist on the Bill being amended in the direction required; even to go so far as a direct vote against the Government...<sup>2</sup>

The Bill was finally passed, without the deletion of either clause. In February 1902, the Annual General Meeting of the Association unanimously resolved to register under the Act that had been the object of so much of its care.

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Ibid., 2 November 1901. The Board also protested against the proposal to allow counsel to appear before the Court without the consent of the other party, but did not insist on this as a requirement for the Labor Party's assent to the whole Bill.

2

Ibid., 5 December 1901.

The decision to commit the Association to compulsory arbitration was a momentous one. In making it, members were by no means prepared to rely entirely on the Court for industrial justice. While the Association worked for the passing of a compulsory arbitration act, it also worked for the strengthening of the trade union movement. When the Sydney District Council of the Australian Labour Federation collapsed, the N.S.W.T.A. worked hard to establish a successor, and in a year a new body called the Sydney Labor Council had 20 unions affiliated to it.<sup>1</sup>

By February 1902, the worst was past for the N.S.W. trade union movement, and the Association was clearly recovering strength. In 1900, its income from membership subscriptions rose by 15 per cent over the previous corresponding half-year, and in 1901 they rose again by 20 per cent.<sup>2</sup> By the turn of the century, the closed shop was making clear progress, and the Association was able to put considerable pressure on employers to be placed on the Fair List.<sup>3</sup> But years of depression and technical change had forced the Association back to preservation of its minimum functions, and returning strength did not revive that sense of identification with a working class it had felt in 1891. After the fragmentation of the trade union movement in the nineties no-one could reassure the Association of the bond between comp., carpenter and navvy, and no-one dared to prophesy again that within a few years there would be no such thing as a blackleg. In the absence

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The old Sydney District Council had never succeeded in representing more than 15 unions.

2

Membership from subscriptions in the second half of 1899 was £307.6s.; for the same period in 1900, £351.7s.; for the same period in 1901, £419.8s.9d.

3

E.g., N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 2 September 1899, case of Marchant and Co.

of faith in the industrial organization of the working class, the Association pledged itself to an Arbitration Court whose decisions were enforceable by the State that ten years ago the labour movement had been as an instrument of the capitalists. The successes of the Labor Party in N.S.W. gave it hope that the capitalists would never again be able to use government as their own exclusive instrument; the Association's allegiance to the Labor Party was a corollary to its commitment to compulsory arbitration.

### The Queensland Typographical Association

In Brisbane, as in Sydney and Melbourne, the events of the year 1890 produced among trade unionists a great enthusiasm and optimism. Despite its defeat in the Brisbane Printing Strike of 1889, the Queensland Typographical Association saw the events of May 1891 as a vindication of their own stand eighteen months earlier and preview of great things to come:

The action of the Australian Labour Federation in blocking the shipment of non-union sheared wool, pending an assurance from the squatters interested that in future they would employ none but union shearers, has caused considerable excitement...Such a rallying of unionists in defence of their fundamental principle has not taken place before, and the result has been a capital demonstration of what can be accomplished by a complete federation of all labour...<sup>1</sup>

Its General Meeting of 17 May voted £50 to the Board to meet the requirements of the A.L.F. in this dispute; a fortnight later members voted £50 to the striking Bootmakers, and followed the A.L.F.'s recommendation for a shilling levy on all members. In August they imposed a pound levy to help defray expenses in the Maritime Strike.

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<sup>1</sup>

A.T.J., vol.XXI, no.239, p.2039

Its effects in Brisbane were not nearly so severe as in Sydney or Melbourne and at the end of the year morale was even higher. The real struggle with Capital, William Lane pointed out, would be at the ballot box. When at the beginning of 1891, a Special General Council Meeting of the A.L.F. prepared an electoral program for the guidance of the prospective labour candidates, the Q.T.A. despatched two delegates with instructions to endorse all the planks of the party platform except one.<sup>1</sup>

By this time the Shearers' Strike of 1891 had begun. This was a far more bitter affair in Queensland than the Maritime Strike had ever been. Large scale military manoeuvre, police action and archaic law were used to coerce the strikers into obeying a settlement guaranteeing freedom of contract. When the strike ended, eleven of its leaders were in prison, the unions were heavily in debt, and the prestige of the A.L.F. had suffered badly. Antagonism between employer and employed ran stronger in Queensland than in any other state, and the partisan actions of the government helped inspire in the members of the Brisbane unions the determination of the shearers at Clermont and Barcaldine.

When the strike came to an end in a time of deepening depression and increasing unemployment in the printing trade, the Courier announced a reduction of a penny per thousand in its piece rate. Successive Brisbane master printers announced the same reduction, with a proportional decrease in time rates. The Master Printers' Association resolved:

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Q.T.A. Board Meeting Minutes, 23 January 1891. The plank objected to was the one that required white universal male suffrage. The Q.T.A. delegates were instructed to seek the deletion of 'white'.

That this Association cannot consent to re-open communication with the Typographical Association, when it was found impossible to conduct negotiations satisfactorily two years ago....

and published a manifesto as a newspaper advertisement which declared that:

the cause which has mainly produced stagnation in general business is the incessant agitation kept up in the alleged interests of labour by a class of professional leaders.

The M.P.A. offered negotiation with members on a 'freedom of contract' basis.<sup>1</sup>

The Q.T.A. replied with a counter manifesto which attributed the depression to land-jobbing, over-borrowing and excess immigration. The 'present unsatisfactory relations existing between Labour and Capital' were the result of the absolute refusal of employers throughout Australia to recognise labour unions, and incitement by the daily press.

But words were the only defiance the Q.T.A. could offer. Despite the Manifesto, it ordered its members not to oppose the reduction, and as depression continued, even verbal resistance to trade encroachments ceased. There were no more Manifestos, and no more analyses of the depression in terms of a conflict of interest between Labour and Capital. At the time of the wage reduction, the Association's correspondent in the A.T.J. noted that with the failure of direct action, 'the only hope for labour....is at the ballot box.'<sup>2</sup> But the Q.T.A. progressively abandoned its interest in parliamentary politics, and in the labour movement generally, as it became totally involved in a struggle for its own survival.

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<sup>1</sup> Q.T.A. General Meeting Minutes, 20 June and 4 July 1891.

<sup>2</sup> A.T.J., vol.XXII, no.252, p.2152.

By 1896, the Association still remained, but it was without power and almost without function. In 1892, its Branches at Townsville and Toowoomba collapsed, and in 1893 its only remaining branch, Rockhampton, disaffiliated. That year the Association suspended even its discretionary unemployment relief; a little over a year later it discontinued its Mortality Fund, and in January 1896 it disaffiliated from the A.T.U. It took no part in the campaign for the passage of the Factory Act of 1896, and its relations with the Labor Party were so slight that Thomas Glassey, the most prominent Labor M.L.A., openly scorned the Association's interests by establishing a small newspaper printed by boy labour. General meetings became less frequent and more sparsely attended, and between January and June 1896, four out of six Board meetings failed for want of a quorum. It is not strange then that the proprietors of the Brisbane dailies managed to instal composing machines in their office without even bothering to negotiate with the Association on the pay or conditions of the operators. Nor, that when the Q.T.A. began to show some signs of revival in 1897 and asked the Master Printers' Association to confer on the revision of its Rules, that body did not bother to reply for a year, and then did so only to refuse.

As the Q.T.A. revived so it confirmed the narrower view of its functions that it had developed in the struggle for survival. The General Meeting of August 1897 formalized the Association's withdrawal from political affairs by voting for disaffiliation from the A.L.F., confirmed this decision three months later, and confirmed it again in December 1899 by a ballot which decided against re-affiliation by 78 votes to 52. The

dissension within the Queensland Labor Party in the years over signing of the pledge, personal defections and 'Socialism in our time' was no inducement to the struggling Association to risk division by taking an active interest in parliamentary politics.<sup>1</sup>

Yet there was some inducement. To an organization such as the Q.T.A., which the employers refused even to recognize, compulsory arbitration had a particularly strong appeal and by 1900 the Association was showing increasing interest in the New Zealand legislation. At the Board meeting in March, the new President, W.P. Colborne, laid on the table the Journal of the New Zealand Department of Labour and spoke to its contents. The Board resolved to recommend the setting up of a 'representative committee from other trades to act with our Association with a view to obtaining an Arbitration and Conciliation Act for Queensland' on the New Zealand model. This body duly met, and in June decided to request the Government to bring down a compulsory arbitration bill like New Zealand's. In July the General Meeting learnt:

that every organization in Queensland had promised to co-operate (with the Arbitration and Conciliation Committee); and that Mr Hinchcliffe (Secretary of the A.L.F.) had been appointed as spokesman for deputation to the Premier.

The deputation was unsuccessful, but the campaign had been the occasion of re-establishing contact with the labour movement. In the slow recovery that was under way by the beginning of the new century, the Q.T.A. once more began to favour involvement in parliamentary politics. This time it

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On the divisions within the Labor Party in Queensland, 1896-99 see S. Rayner, 'The Evolution of the Queensland Labour Party to 1907', unpublished M.A. thesis, Queensland 1941, chapter V.



sought not a social revolution that would emancipate an entire working class, but a compulsory arbitration act that would guarantee the survival of a trade union movement that was, like itself, near extinction. For this benefit it had to rely heavily on the good graces of men whom it had only a few years earlier condemned as enemies of Labour.

### The South Australian Typographical Association

In Adelaide, the course of events was much more placid than in the other capitals. Apart from a minor scuffle at Port Adelaide in its concluding stages, the Maritime Strike produced no violence, and for some time after that, the Trades and Labour Council each year reported that it was required to negotiate in no disputes. As a direct result of the Maritime Strike, the Council succeeded in increasing the number of unions affiliated with it, and set up a loose organization (soon to become the United Labour Party) which successfully promoted Labour candidates at parliamentary elections from 1891 onwards.

The members of the S.A.T.A. contributed loyally to the Maritime Strike Fund<sup>1</sup> and shared a little in the excitement that followed the election of four Trades and Labour Council candidates in May 1891. The South Australian correspondent to the A.T.J. wrote:

The return of these working men to Parliament is the first fruits of the 'defeat' inflicted on the labour party by the Employers' Union in the late maritime strike...That 'defeat' will prove in the long run the best thing that could have happened for the class it was intended to crush. The days of capitalistic monopoly of political power are numbered....<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>They contributed £120 as individuals. The Association had no power to order a levy for purposes 'outside the printing trade'. It saw no reason to amend this clause for the rest of the decade.

<sup>2</sup>

A.T.J., vol.XXII, no.251, p.2146.

But the views of the South Australian correspondent were not those of the S.A.T.A. The Association appointed delegates to the United Labour Party, and maintained its representation, but despite the early election to parliament of two of its Presidents as Labor candidates,<sup>1</sup> it did not see fit to vote the Party any sum of money, nor did it attempt to initiate policy or influence legislation. Thus it showed no interest in the Factory act of 1894, nor in Kingston's Conciliation and Arbitration Act of the same year.

Neither of these measures were of much assistance to the bargaining power of a weak union. Like the New South Wales and Queensland Acts, the former was concerned almost entirely with health and safety regulations, and did not provide for wages boards on the Victorian model. The Conciliation and Arbitration Act was a compulsory measure in so far as it could compel both parties to a dispute to abide by the decision of the Tribunal it set up. But this compulsion was binding only on those unions registered with the Court; since registration was voluntary, employers' unions who stood to gain nothing and employees' unions who feared loss of the right to strike both declined to register.<sup>2</sup> The Act was virtually a dead letter. But for the rest of the nineties, the S.A.T.A. showed no interest on its admendment, nor did it seek the addition of Wages Board clauses to the Factory Act.

This political passivity of the S.A.T.A. resulted mainly from its comparative well-being. Most of its members

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Andrew Kirkpatrick, a former President, was elected to the Legislative Council in 1891; Mr J.A. McPherson, who became President in 1893, was elected as M.H.A. for East Adelaide in January 1892.

<sup>2</sup> On the provisions of the Act and their effect see J.J. Craig, 'The South Australian Labour Party to 1917', M.A. thesis, Adelaide, 1940, p.160 ff.

were in regular work, and they remained comfortably off.<sup>1</sup> The Great Strikes never inspired in South Australia anything like the degree of class feeling that prevailed in the eastern capitals, and after 1892 relations between employer and employee in the printing trade were amicable. Radical liberals like Charles Kingston continued to attract a large proportion of working men's votes. In the view of those craftsmen who considered that the supreme function of the S.A.T.A. was to protect privilege, there was nothing to be gained by political involvement, and perhaps a good deal to be lost.

### The Smaller Societies

The S.A.T.A. was in a position to have some influence on labour legislation, and would not; the Tasmanian Societies could not. In Northern Tasmania, the thirty members of the Society based on the two Launceston dailies struggled on through successive reductions in the setting rate until 1896 they assessed their position as hopeless, and disbanded. In Southern Tasmania, the Hobart Society maintained about fifty members throughout the nineties, and affiliated with the local Trades and Labour Council, but apart from that, appears to have left no mark on the labour movement, and continued into the 1900s without benefit of Wages Board or Arbitration Act.

In Western Australia, the Societies were for most of the period not much larger, but their connections with the labour movement were far stronger. At first there were in

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Delegates at the A.T.U. Conferences of 1892 and 1895 referred to the low level of unemployment among members of the S.A.T.A. The jobbing trade was far smaller than in Sydney or Melbourne, and as in those two cities, work on the morning dailies was fairly constant. They did not instal Linotypes until 1898, and then gradually, with compensation paid to the dispossessed framers.

Western Australia two societies established separately at Albany and Perth; these joined forces in the first half of 1890, and organization was continuous from that date, despite the winding up of the Albany Branch in 1892. A year later the Perth Society had about 60 members, including 'a number of sterling Society men from the London Society of Compositors'.<sup>1</sup>

The Society took a vigorous interest in the organization of other trade unions, and some of its members at least were active in the representation of Labour in parliament. In September 1892, it moved for the resuscitation of the Trades and Labour Council, and when this was achieved early in 1893, supplied the Council with its first secretary, Mr Richard Hornby. In 1894, its Vice-President, Mr G.C. Baker, won the distinction of being nominated as the first Labour candidate in Western Australia. Later in the year, the Society played a part in the campaign for an Employers' Liability Act. But the most important legislation of the Western Australian Parliament on labour matters in these years was the passing of a Conciliation and Arbitration Act on the New Zealand Model. The Trades and Labour Council was most anxious to see such an Act on the books, and it was largely in response to their requests that the Government put the Bill through. As the Linotypes advanced from the East, the Perth Society registered under the Act soon after its proclamation.

By 1899 the Perth Society had just over 100 members, and out in the desert, three vigorous offshoots had about as many more between them. The first of these was the Coolgardie Society, formed in November 1895, 'in a little 6 x 8 tent, with the thermometer at 110° in the water-bag'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XXIII, no.267, p.2282.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., June 1905, no.392, p.11.

The second was formed in September 1896 at Menzies, where two dailies had sprung up overnight. The third and enduring one was founded at Kalgoorlie in December 1897. Together with those at Ballarat, Bendigo and the Barrier, this made six inland typographical societies operating at the beginning of 1900. Counting Newcastle as a separate Society, there were by then thirteen typographical societies scattered over the million and a half square miles of Australia's southern half.

### The Australasian Typographical Union

This proliferation of societies did not help the development of the A.T.U. as a national union. The obstacle was not so much now communication, as the change in the nature of the Societies themselves brought on by the continued depression and the introduction of the Linotype.

Since the importance the A.T.U. had won in the late 1880s depended above all on its ability to muster large funds for the settlement of trade disputes, its influence declined when it ceased to be able to raise money, and when its constituent societies largely abandoned strike action. But for the first five years of the nineties, when societies were still inclined to resist, it remained a potent influence in the determination of trade disputes. The President reported at the 1892 Triennial Conference that the Union had in the previous three years spent £874 in the defence of the Scales of Charges of seven Societies.<sup>1</sup> As late as 1894, the A.T.U. was able to provide £1300 for the Sydney Jobbing Strike, and still report at the Triennial Conference of 1895 that its Reserve Fund stood at over £1100.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., vol.XXIII, no.269, p.2299.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., vol.XXVI, no.306, Supplement, Report of Triennial Conference.

But its part in the Sydney Jobbing Strike was the Union's last great deed. From then on, its importance declined rapidly, and between 1894 and 1896 it had to face threats of secession by two of its members.

Ironically, the first of these came from its progenitor, the S.A.T.A. The 1892 Triennial Conference met in Adelaide, and a delegation of its members negotiated the opening of the Register office, closed since the 1888 strike. The S.A.T.A. resented this invasion of its sovereignty, and was in no mood to be accommodating in the dispute over the A.T.U. Mortality Fund.

By the nineties, all Typographical Societies in the Australian colonies were members of the A.T.U., and all of them had mortality funds. But the benefits differed from Society to Society, and a compositor travelling from one place to another sometimes stood to lose when he transferred his membership. To get over this difficulty, the Triennial Conference of 1892 arranged that the A.T.U. should take over the responsibility of paying a basic sum of £25 to each claimant on the various Mortality Funds, and recoup itself by annually levying each Society in proportion to its membership. This caught the S.A.T.A. in a forked stick. Its funding arrangements were geared to pay less than £25 a claim, and members would not vary these; but it was responsible to the Union for its share in each benefit payment at this amount. Correspondence between the Union and the Society became bitter; the S.A.T.A. proposed a reduction of the general benefit to £15 as a notice of motion to the Triennial Conference of 1895, and made it clear that it would consider seceding if the motion was not carried. The motion was defeated by nine votes to two, for the simple reason that members contributing at higher rates did not intend to see their beneficiaries deprived of £10 each. South Australia did not secede, but neither did it continue as an enthusiastic member.

Queensland too had its troubles with the Mortality Fund, and gave notice that it wished to withdraw from it to the 1895 Conference. Conference ruled that this was constitutionally impossible, and in January 1896 a ballot of Q.T.A. members decided to secede from the Union by 45 votes to 14.

The causes of this decision went back over six years, to the Brisbane Printing Strike, but they were all of them financial. In their Half Yearly Report to members in July 1893, the Board of Management complained that ever since the strike they had been 'twitted' with the amount of money paid them. They alleged long delays in dealing with the business of the Q.T.A. (especially its mortality claims) and judged affiliation fees excessive in relation to benefits obtained.<sup>1</sup> They recommended disaffiliation; their recommendation was not acted on then, but stark bankruptcy forced the decision some two years later.<sup>2</sup>

Queensland's secession meant that the establishment of a uniform code of trade practices and payments throughout the colonies was no longer theoretically possible. But from a practical point of view the depression had made its realization impossible from the beginning of the nineties,<sup>3</sup> and the disruption of the Societies that followed the introduction of the Linotypes merely confirmed an already hopeless situation. The A.T.U. recognized its national responsibilities by corresponding on the Linotype problem with typographical societies overseas, and holding a special

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Q.T.A. Minutes of General Meeting, 29 July 1893.

2

Queensland was the only formal secession. New Zealand does not seem to have paid capitation after 1891 and took no part in the union from that date.

3

The decision of the 1892 conference was 'that it would be ruinous to try to make a general scale of charges at the present time', A.T.J., vol.XXIII, no.269, p.2306.

conference which issued a policy statement on the working of the Linotype for the guidance of the Societies.<sup>1</sup> They accepted the suggestions, but were in no position to enforce them. Linotype agreements in Sydney and Melbourne developed piecemeal and not one of them retained the cherished principle of operation of the machines on wage rather than piece rates.

The Societies had adopted the A.T.U. Linotype recommendations in desperation. As sovereign societies they had never gladly accepted A.T.U. recommendations (except where these coincided with their own) when times were good, and now they were not all disposed to accept outside interference. In 1895 at the instance of the N.S.W.T.A., the Triennial Conference of the A.T.U. recommended that the Societies encourage the amalgamation of the kindred trades. Far from encouraging amalgamation the Societies in Adelaide and Melbourne did nothing for those years and then deliberately neglected opportunities placed in their way. The S.A.T.A. dismissed an application by stereotypers for membership until such time as they showed better reason for their request.<sup>2</sup> The M.T.S. did not even bother to notice officially the formation of an Amalgamated Newspaper Employers' Union in 1899 and apparently had no regrets when it expired shortly afterwards.<sup>3</sup>

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N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 13 December 1894.

2

S.A.T.A. Minutes, Board and General Meetings, 30 January 1897.

3

Victorian Printers' Operatives Union, Silver Jubilee Number.



Societies that treated the recommendations of the A.T.U. in this way were not inclined to augment its finances, and by the second half of the nineties were scarcely in a position to do so anyway. As the membership of its affiliates fell, so the A.T.U.'s income from capitation fees diminished. But in 1896 a referendum of members decided on the discontinuance of a special penny levy. In 1899, the Societies rejected proposals to increase the A.T.U.'s reserve fund, and to guarantee the circulation of the A.T.J. now published by the A.T.U. The A.T.J. struggled for a while, and expired.<sup>1</sup> The A.T.U. Council then concentrated on extracting a debt of about £360 from the M.T.S., a process that extended over three years and did nothing to improve relations between the two bodies.<sup>2</sup>

By 1901, the influence of the A.T.U. had declined to the point where it was almost negligible. Each of its component societies had had to face common problems, the network of their organization had extended, and composers migrated far more frequently,<sup>3</sup> but the result had not been an expansion of powers of the national union. Instead, each Society had turned inward in its struggle for survival.

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The A.T.U. took over the A.T.J. from the M.T.S. in April 1897, after the Society had long protested at the losses it had incurred. The A.T.J. ceased monthly publication from March 1899, and published only four times in the next 12 months. It published only twice in 1901, but became a monthly again from January 1902.

2

The matter was raised at the Triennial Conference of 1898, and was not patched up until 1902.

3

The President of the A.T.U., Mr Findley, remarked at the 1902 Triennial Conference that 'compositors travelled more than any other 'class''.

As the new century began, the Australasian Typographical Union was anachronistic and almost irrelevant.<sup>1</sup>

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### British and Colonial Typographical Societies

In Britain, only a fairly small increase in unemployment followed on the introduction of Linotype machines into the newspaper composing room. Men displaced found employment in an expanding book and jobbing industry. Membership of typographical societies increased rapidly, and the proportion of 'society men' in the industry grew. The societies made some progress towards closer organization, took more interest in 'politics', and less in the settlement of differences with employers by their reference to arbitration.

In Australia, the societies had already experienced some years of the worst depression the colonies had every known before the Linotypes arrived. Disaster followed. Even in good times, the book and jobbing industry would not have been large enough for its expansion to have absorbed men displaced from newspapers. The strongest societies lost more than a half of their membership; the weakest were wiped out. The A.T.U., designed to assist strike action and dependent for its finance on per capita contributions from member societies, almost faded away.

Political demoralization followed heavy and chronic unemployment. In the Great Strikes, the societies donated thousands of pounds to the strikers, and their members had repeatedly expressed their solidarity with Labour in its struggle with Capital. Most of this spirit had already

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In October 1901 the Secretary of the A.T.U. wrote to the Secretary of the M.T.S. questioning whether it was worth while holding the Triennial Conference that was due '... there being so little business to transact.' M.T.S. Minutes, 19 October 1901.

ebbed by the time the Linotype arrived. Their rapid installation in newspaper offices - the strongholds of typographical unionism - almost destroyed it utterly. The societies surveyed the ruins of labour organization about them, settled down in grim concentration on their own survival, and abandoned 'politics' as a possible divider of their badly weakened membership strength.

The collapse of the trade union movement meant that they could expect no help from it in their revival. As trade slowly improved, they re-discovered their common interest with the 'fair' employer in suppressing unfair competitors. They supported the establishment of arbitral institutions through which the State could exercise its influence to establish 'fair' conditions as a common rule throughout the trade.

In Victoria, the government established a wages Board for the printing trade with the support of both the Master Printers' Association and the M.T.S. In New South Wales, where B.R. Wise was influential, the government legislated for the establishment of a Court of Arbitration<sup>1</sup>. The Q.T.A. declared for an arbitration court, and so did the newly-established society in Western Australia. Of all the major typographical societies, only the S.A.T.A. had not developed a policy on the establishment of wages boards or arbitration courts by 1901.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the Master Printers' records themselves are inadequate, it is clear that the Masters were the initiators of the movement for the establishment of a Wages Board in the printing industry in Victoria. In New South Wales the attitude of the Master Printers' towards compulsory arbitration can be deduced neither from their records nor any other source I have discovered.

In Sydney the N.S.W.T.A. had taken another most important step by endorsing the platform of the Political Labor League and appointing delegates to its Conference. This parliamentary connection proved its worth in the next year, when the N.S.W.T.A. was able to exercise considerable influence on the shaping of the Act that established a Court of Arbitration. That affiliation with parliamentary Labor was a logical complement to reliance on State arbitration was apparent to some members in other societies, but in no other colony had a Labour Party managed to exert nearly so much influence as it had in New South Wales, and the bogey of 'politics' was therefore stronger.

The N.S.W.T.A.'s affiliation with the Political Labor League was inspired only in a secondary way by any sense of identification with a working class. 1891 was over, and would come no more. What the N.S.W.T.A. did, it did primarily out of a sense of securing its own interest, and in this sense its behaviour presents no variation from that of any of the other colonial societies. Its simultaneous commitment both to 'Labour' and the 'fair' employer placed it in an ambiguous position; and this process repeated, it seems, goes a good way to explain the political ambiguities of the Labor League itself.

By 1900, the political views of both British and colonial typographical societies were approaching one another. The British societies were moving slowly towards the adoption of a view of politics based on the assumption of conflict of interests between employers and employees. The colonial societies had taken their strongest stand for this policy in the early nineties. By the new century they were - tactically, at least - retreating from it.

## CHAPTER SIX

DIRECT ACTION, STATE ARBITRATION AND THE  
FEDERAL COURT

The British Typographical Societies, 1901-1916.

After 1900, the letterpress printing industry in the United Kingdom continued to expand rapidly. The Census of 1901 showed that the industry employed 106,187 workers; the Census of 1911 recorded 137,637.<sup>1</sup> The increase resulted mainly from the expansion of the jobbing trade. The increasing versatility of the Linotype machine reduced costs of composition, and the application of new engraving techniques made possible the cheap reproduction of illustrations in colour and tone.<sup>2</sup>

How these changed in printing styles and industrial techniques affected the number of compositors employed is not clear from the histories of the typographical societies, or from other sources available. Relative to others employed in the industry their numbers certainly declined, and between 1911 and 1931 their numbers declined absolutely.<sup>3</sup> Whether they declined absolutely in number between 1901 and 1911 is uncertain but it seems that this is possibly true

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1

Quoted by Alford, 'The London Letterpress Printing Industry', pp. 173, 293.

2

Technical changes in the Australian industry closely paralleled those in the British. This chapter will later discuss technical change more fully in connection with the Australian industry.

3

On the basis of the censuses of these years, Cannon estimates the number of hand and machine compositors in the United Kingdom as 42,000 in 1911, and less than 39,000 in 1931. The latter year however was a year of heavy unemployment in all industries.

of London at least.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is the effect of technical change upon the composers' employment in this period any clearer from the sources available. Unemployment in the printing and bookbinding industry as a whole was steady at between about 4.5 and 5.5 per cent for the ten years 1901-1911.<sup>2</sup> How much of this was due to unemployment among composers is impossible to say with any precision. Payment of unemployment benefits to members of the L.S.C. became heavier for some years after 1898 and heavier again after 1908.<sup>3</sup> This pattern of unemployment benefit payment is much the same for the T.A., and for the S.T.A.<sup>4</sup>

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The membership of the L.S.C. in 1901 was 11,287, or 68 per cent of the London composers. By 1911, Cannon argues (p.102) that the proportion of members was approaching 90 per cent of the trade; but membership had increased only to 12,050. In the Provinces, the T.A.'s membership increased from 16,600 to 21,768, but since the T.A. began admitting members of other crafts in this period it is impossible to deduce from this figure anything about its compositor membership. Given the migration of the London book industry to the Provinces in these years, it is unlikely to have declined. The history of the S.T.A. quotes no membership figures.

2

Alford, 'The London Letterpress Printing Industry', p.224.

3

The L.S.C. liberalized its unemployment benefits in 1898; and the new scheme applied first for a full year in 1899. In that year, benefit payable was £12,919. Membership remained almost stationary, but benefit payment was above £15,000 for all years 1899-1906 save one. In the latter year it exceeded £18,000. From 1908-1914 it was consistently above £22,000, though maximum membership in this period was only 600 above the 1899 figure. The historians of the Society mention no liberalization of benefit between 1901 and 1914.

4

The S.T.A. and the T.A. however liberalized their unemployment benefit payments in 1907 and 1908. Their histories do not say what part of the increased total benefit payment is due to the more generous provisions of the scheme.

The expansion of the industry and its technical diversification also immensely complicated the problem of organizing employees in the printing industry into unions. This problem was severe enough in London by the turn of the century; in the next ten years it extended itself into the provinces, and unions that had previously thought of themselves as 'London' unions began to claim national coverage.<sup>1</sup> Thus the T.A., which had begun to extend its coverage to include non-typographical workers in the printing industry, found itself involved in almost constant demarcation disputes with other unions that now claimed coverage over workers in the provinces.<sup>2</sup> The other unions, in their turn, disputed among themselves.<sup>3</sup>

This feuding over demarcation issues underlined the need for amalgamation of the unions in the printing trade, but also virtually prohibited the cure from being taken. In 1907, the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. recommended amalgamation of the typographical societies, but the conferences which followed finally broke down in 1910 over the degree of autonomy the societies would retain. The societies could not even agree on such a limited issue as an arrangement for the reciprocal payment of strike and unemployment benefits.<sup>4</sup> This inability to agree on

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e.g. The Operative Printers' Assistants' Society, established a branch in Manchester in 1904 and became the National Society of Operative Printers' Assistants (N.A.T.S.O.P.A.) The same process occurred with The London Association of Correctors of the Press, and with the National Union of Printing and Paper Workers.

2

Part of this was due to the rapid development of printing in the 'home counties'. Thus the T.A. found itself in dispute with the L.S.C. and the Printing Machine Managers' Trade Society (P.M.M.T.S.) who considered that their London jurisdiction extended to these areas.

3

e.g. between N.A.T.S.O.P.A. and the P.M.M.T.S.

4

A satisfactory arrangement was reached between the T.A. and the L.S.C. in 1919 and between the T.A. and the London Platen Machine Minders Society in 1921.

closer organization limited the societies' capacity for militant action, and especially penalized the L.S.C. when it organized a strike of the London printing trade in 1911.

The L.S.C.'s strike of 1911 was the only major one of this period, but all the societies showed a tendency to rely even less on arbitration. Their histories do not discuss reasons, but it seems likely that persistent unemployment continued to demonstrate to the satisfaction of most members, that the employers' interests conflicted with their own, and that as trade unionists they had distinct problems that no outsider could properly comprehend sympathetically. Thus the T.A. apparently submitted only one small matter to arbitration in this period,<sup>1</sup> and in 1908 rescinded the clause in its rules that guaranteed its willingness to submit disputes to arbitral settlement.

Like the T.A., the L.S.C. also submitted a dispute to arbitration in this period and thereby secured a reduction of the working week to 52 hours and a half. But by 1911, it was prepared to back its claim for 50 hours by threat of strike. Though it found that it could rely on very little help from the other printing unions,<sup>2</sup> it called its men out of the shops that did not meet its demands, and after three months had succeeded in establishing 50 hours as the compositors' working week in London. It paid dearly for its success, however. The strike cost it over £40,000 - two thirds of its accumulated funds - and resulted in two

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1

On hours and wages at Stockport in 1903.

2

The L.S.C.'s Committee reported 'first one society and then another expressed its unwillingness or inability to take part in the movement...and the L.S.C. and the Warehouseman's Union were left alone to carry on the movement, with assurances from the Readers and the Operative Printers' Assistants' that they would be joining the Strike Committee within a short time' - quoted by Howe and Waite, 'The London Society of Compositors', p.294.



large and several small firms being closed to its members.<sup>1</sup>  
It thereby incurred increased unemployment benefit payments of over £20,000.<sup>2</sup>

The L.S.C.'s progress towards strike action in 1911 was paralleled by increasing commitment to the representation of Labour in parliament. It had affiliated to the Labour Representation Committee, and in 1906 successfully stood its secretary, C.W. Bowerman, as candidate for Deptford. But the L.S.C. still held some reservations about its connection with the Labour Party. It presented Bowerman as a man 'to look after the interests of Labour, of trade unions and the L.S.C.'.<sup>3</sup>

Though the Trade Union Act of 1913 put the legal right of unions to maintain a political fund beyond doubt<sup>4</sup>, the L.S.C. did not establish one until 1916, and then only after considerable pressure from the Labour Party itself. One fifth of its members then exercised their option of 'contracting out'.

The T.A. was less equivocal. It decided on contribution to the Labour Representation Committee Maintenance Fund in 1903, and in 1906 successfully stood one of its organizers, G.B. Roberts, as Labour candidate for Norwich. Though some of its members succeeded in having the Osborne Judgment

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This seems to have added over £20,000 to the expenditure of its unemployment benefit fund in the next two years.

2

Howe and Waite, The London Society of Compositors, p.339, quoted the unemployment benefits paid by the L.S.C. as £22,465 for 1910, £39,907 in 1911, £34,437 in 1912 and £25,092 in 1913.

3

Cannon, 'The Social Situation of the Skilled Worker', p.95.

4

The Trade Union Act was passed as a result of the agitation that followed the Osborne Judgment. The Act permitted unions to adopt 'political objects' - including the maintenance of a political fund - provided members agreed by ballot. Members who did not wish to contribute to the fund were to be free to 'contract out' without penalty.

applied to the T.A. in 1910, the amount collected for the Maintenance Fund by ordinary donation was scarcely less than that previously raised by compulsory contribution.<sup>1</sup> With the passage of the Trade Union Act in 1913, the T.A. re-instituted its Political Fund on its previous basis within the year.<sup>2</sup>

Australian typographical societies also established closer alliance with the Labor Party in this period, but under different circumstances. Indeed, with one exception, they became in these 16 years organizations very different from the British typographical societies that had fathered them.

#### The Economy and the Labour Movement in Australia

There was no final recovery from the depression of the nineties until about 1906. Australia's gross domestic production did not reach its 1891 value again until 1903-4; it remained almost stationary until 1906-7, and then began to rise more definitely. After 1910, its rate of increase accelerated and by 1913-14, its value

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1

From an average of £873 a year to £829.

2

The S.T.A. inaugurated a Parliamentary Representation Fund in 1908, and some of its members also secured an injunction against its use. It continued to donate to Labor Party Funds, but its history does not record the size of donations. It made no use of the Trade Union Act of 1913.

was half as great again as it had been in 1903-4.<sup>1</sup>

Wages recovered their 'real' pre-depression value by 1901, then fell slightly until 1905, when they attained it again.<sup>2</sup> But by no means all the work force benefited from this recovery. Between 1902 and 1906, the general level of unemployment throughout Australia probably exceeded eight per cent.<sup>3</sup> After that, it gradually fell, so that an increasing proportion of wage-earners benefited from wages that maintained their 'real' value despite rising prices.

The general revival of the economy helped the trade

1

Butlin, Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing, p.46Q-1. Butlin estimates that the value of gross domestic production, at constant prices, was

	£m.
1891	211.6
1902-3	207.5
1903-4	243.2
1904-5	237.5
1905-6	246.9
1906-7	272.6
1907-8	271.2
1908-9	289.0
1909-10	313.3
1913-14	355.8

2

P.G. Macarthy, 'Wage and Employment Experience of Australian Wage Earners 1891-1914', unpublished seminar paper, Department of Economic History, A.N.U., p.2.

3

N.G. Butlin, in Tables A and B of 'Engineering Unemployment', Economic Record, 1945-6, pp.246 and 249, estimates unemployment among engineers as 8.8, 8.8, and 8.4 per cent for the years 1903-05. It can be argued strongly that these figures are fairly representative of general unemployment; see Macarthy, 'Wages and Employment Experience of Australian Wage Earners', Appendix, p.12.

union movement re-establish itself.<sup>1</sup> Only the hardiest of unions had survived the nineties, and these were nearly all craft unions; in 1901, total union membership was about 55,000. By 1910, the number of unions had more than doubled, and their membership was a little over 300,000. By 1913, total union membership was almost half a million.<sup>2</sup>

This remarkable increase probably owed as much to legislation as it did to economic recovery. By 1902, a Wages Board system was operating in Victoria, and Courts of Industrial Arbitration in New South Wales and Western Australia. In 1904, the Commonwealth Parliament passed an Act to establish an Industrial Arbitration Court that would hear disputes extending beyond the borders of any one State. The Commonwealth Court offered an alternative for interstate unions that disliked bargaining in States where there was no Arbitration Court or Wages Board system. Within a few years after the Commonwealth Court began its work, the Governments of South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania had Wages Boards in operation.

The institution of Wages Boards and Courts of Arbitration stimulated the development of trade unions. Trades and Labour Councils organized unions among unskilled workers and recruited members for them with great energy.<sup>3</sup>

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1

The following account of the labour movement is based on J.T. Sutcliffe: A History of Trade Unionism in Australia  
V.G. Childe, How Labour Governs  
R.A. Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics in Eastern Australia and The Coal Miners of New South Wales.  
I.A.N. Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics.

2

Commonwealth Labor Reports, Nos. 2 and 12.

3

According to Childe (How Labour Governs, p.88) in the two years following the passing of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1901, 111 new unions were registered. In the ten years previous to the passing of the Act, only 26 new unions had been registered.

They had several reasons for doing so. They had concern for the plight of the unskilled workers, and a Court Award or Wages Board Determination was the surest way to higher wages for these men. But the motives of the craft unions that dominated the Trades and Labour Councils were not entirely altruistic. In helping unions of unskilled workers to get their first Award from a Court, they could preserve their own demarcations of skilled and unskilled work. They could do the same in securing determinations from Wages Board, where the danger was even greater. Employees could be represented on a Wages Board by any specified number chosen from among them, and failing the organization of a union, the representatives of the workers could well turn out to be representatives of the employers, who could then use the resulting determination to erode the privileges of the skilled men.

This involvement with the legal machinery of the State committed even the reluctant unions to affiliation with the Labor parties. They regarded Labor parliamentarians as intermediaries, and in the long run, as controllers of the State in their interest. They had reason for their optimism. Besides being able to continue the tactic of 'support in return for concessions', Labor parties had by 1913 been able to govern for short periods in Western Australia and Queensland, and for substantial periods in New South Wales and the Commonwealth. But with these electoral triumphs came disillusion.

The Labor parties had never been without their critics. Both small Socialist sects and trade union leaders had often pointed out the dislike Labor parliamentarians had for strikes, particularly near election time. They accused them of placing their own political survival before the welfare of the trade union movement that they should be serving. Even before Labor parties secured any substantial

period of government, a thousand incidents had strained relations between trade unionists and parliamentarians. Once they began to govern, Labor parties showed a disinclination to undertake any specifically trade union legislation. They continued to show an abhorrence of strikes, and a preference for Court and Wages Board Systems with penalties for those unions that breached their decisions. Their attitude strengthened the case of those who argued that the trade unionists must rely on themselves for their salvation.

From 1902 onwards, interstate and State trade union conferences had agreed on the need for 'closer organization' of the trade union movement. Resolutions advocated the organization of 'kindred trades', increased authority for trades and labour councils, and the establishment of national organizations. Craft unions were usually willing enough to do what they could about organizing the unorganized in their own industry if only for their own protection; but they balked at any suggestion that they would have to yield some of their own sovereignty. None of the schemes for the 'Federation of Labour' matured.

Thus there was never really much hope that a revolutionary plan that involved the elimination of craft privilege would ever succeed in winning the general approval of the trade union movement, and, given this, the success of the Industrial Workers of the World is remarkable. In October 1907, a convention of small socialist groups met in Sydney. The outcome of this meeting was the establishment of a section of the I.W.W. in Australia. The I.W.W. preached salvation of the working class through the One Big Union, an organization of six sections and 36 departments which eliminated distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers. Its purpose was not to raise wages, but to make the revolution without which all reforms were vain.

Although employers and parliamentarians of all parties were inclined to see I.W.W. influence everywhere, the organization had very little to do with the three largest of the many strikes between 1909 and 1912. Early in 1909, the miners at Broken Hill stopped work, and later in the same year, there was a general strike of coalminers in New South Wales. In 1912, all trade unionists in Brisbane went on strike for about a month. In each case, the government intervened on the side of the employers, and the defeat of the strikers was complete. But in these years of full employment, the unions did not suffer as they had in the nineties. The main effect of the defeats in both States was to strengthen trade union efforts for the return of Labor governments. In Queensland, where the whole trade union movement was affected, there was another result. Unions began to take steps to bring themselves within the ambit of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

#### The Printing Industry and the Typographical Societies in Australia

The printing industry seems to have recovered from the depression more quickly than the economy as a whole, but followed its general trend. In N.S.W., the value of the industry's production had passed its 1891 level by 1901. It fell a little in the next few years, but by 1906 had recovered again.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The New South Wales Statistical Registers quote the value of output of the printing industry as

1891	£1,089,319
1901	£1,328,922
1904	£1,267,293
1906	£1,396,774

Victorian Statistical Registers do not quote value of output figures for 1891 and 1901, but the Censuses of 1891 and 1901 show 4,228 persons employed in Books and Publications in the former year, and 5,306 in the latter. Since productivity could not have fallen after the introduction of the Linotype, it is reasonable to deduce an increase in value of output.

Between 1901 and 1906 in all States except South Australia, there were increases in the number the industry employed that ranged from modest to handsome. In Queensland, the work force increased by about six per cent; in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia between 25 and 30 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

In this period of general expansion of the industry, the Linotype machine and smaller, cheaper imitations<sup>2</sup> almost completed their conquest of the jobbing and country printing trades. The result was severe unemployment among hand compositors. In N.S.W., Victoria and South Australia, between seven and eight per cent of those describing themselves as compositors were out of work on Census Day 1901, and unemployment seems to have remained a serious problem at least until 1904.<sup>3</sup> In some States, the number employed in the industry actually decreased in certain years; in South Australia between 1902 and 1904, in Queensland

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1

Employment in Books, Paper, Printing:

	<u>1901</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>Increase %</u>
N.S.W.	5,573	6,961	24.9
Victoria	5,744 /	7,371	28.3
Queensland	2,064	2,182	5.7
South Australia	1,429 *	1,366	- 4.4
Western Australia	863	1,127	30.6

Source: Statistical Registers. \* 1902 figure.

/ This variation from the Register figure takes account of category changes made by the statistician.

2

The most common were the Monoline and Barotype.

3

Census returns on unemployment were confused by the ambiguity of the classification 'printer'. In N.S.W. it seems that about 2,671 males were wage-earning compositors, and that 201 of these were unemployed. The proportion in South Australia and Victoria is similar.



between 1901 and 1904, and in Western Australia in 1902.<sup>1</sup>

After 1906, unemployment gradually fell off until it became almost negligible in the eastern States. Giving evidence before a Royal Commission in August, 1911, the Secretary of the N.S.W.T.A. stated that in the previous fortnight only one per cent of N.S.W.T.A. members had been out of work for more than a day or so.<sup>2</sup> In 1912, the Secretary of the M.T.S. quoted about four per cent of his members as unemployed in April, usually one of the slackest months of the year.<sup>3</sup> South Australia and Queensland showed a similar improvement. In the West, unemployment remained a problem until about 1910, but after that year fell away to approach the national average, which was 3.5 per cent for the year 1913.

Steadier employment in the industry resulted partly from the migration, death or retirement of those old hand compositors who had 'tramped it'<sup>4</sup> between country towns

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<sup>1</sup> The South Australian Statistical Register for 1902, 1904 and 1906 give the number employed in Books, Paper and Printing as 1,429, 1,169 and 1,366 respectively. Books, Paper and Printing in Queensland employed 2,064 in 1901, 1,936 in 1903, 1,981 in 1905 and 2,182 in 1906. The Reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops show 24 fewer compositors employed in Brisbane in 1905 than in 1903.

<sup>2</sup>

Royal Commission Inquiring into the Alleged Shortage of Labour in the State of New South Wales, Interim Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.15415, in N.S.W. Parliamentary Papers, vol.II, 1911-12. The membership of the N.S.W.T.A. was about 1500.

<sup>3</sup> In April 1912 the Secretary issued 1,297 papers for a ballot of members. He also stated that the number of unemployed was fifty. However, the average number of members signing the Unemployment Book was 26 a day in April - about two per cent. (A.T.J., no.475, May 1912, p.5)

<sup>4</sup> Mr P. Sullivan, who was apprenticed on the Orange Advocate in 1906, recalls that it was the custom to give an arriving tramp four hours' work or its cash equivalent.

or haunted the Government Printing Offices in the hope of a few weeks' setting on the electoral rolls. But it resulted more from the immense expansion of the industry itself. In New South Wales, the value of output of the printing trade increased by over a half between 1906 and 1910, and the number employed in the industry by 27 per cent. In the next three years, both value of output and the number employed increased by about twenty per cent.<sup>1</sup> No other State achieved this rate of expansion, but in all of them the printing trade employed far more people in 1913 than it had in 1906.<sup>2</sup>

The increase in the number employed resulted mainly from the expansion of the jobbing trade.<sup>3</sup> Part of this expansion was due to lower costs of composition. After 1900, more versatile models of the Linotype machine became capable of doing an increasing range of jobbing work, and the adoption of point system type cut composition time

<sup>1</sup>

Value of Output and Number Employed, Books, Paper and Printing, New South Wales:

1906	£1,396,774	6,961
1910	£2,076,433	8,642
1913	£2,794,304	10,009

Source: Statistical Registers.

<sup>2</sup>

Numbers Employed in Books, Paper and Printing

	1901	1913
Victoria	5,744 /	9,118
Queensland	2,064	2,982
South Australia	1,178 *	1,932
Western Australia	863	1,229

\* Census figure.

/ This figure makes allowance for change of classification.

<sup>3</sup>

Newspapers became much larger, their extra editions more common, and their circulation far greater. They took on more stereotypers and rotary machinists, but their typographical sections expanded only slowly. The Sydney Daily Telegraph employed 74 compositors just before it installed Linotypes; it did not employ as many again until after the Second World War.

still further. But much of the industry's expansion followed on the rapid spread of new styles in advertising and packaging that made far greater use of colour and illustration. The new styles relied mainly on printing techniques that had been established in the eighties and nineties, in the United States and Great Britain where a better understanding of the physics of light and physiology of colour vision had made possible the cheap reproduction of illustrations in tone and colour.

Ever since the seventies, it had been possible to make a metal printing plate from a photographic negative. When a negative was developed onto a sensitized plate, the light-hardened areas acted as a 'resist' to an acid etch, so that the image rose in relief on the plate as the non-printing part of it was eaten away by the acid. This method reached Australia by the eighties,<sup>1</sup> but was useful only for the reproduction of line drawings. It could no more reproduce graduations in tone than the wood-engravings that it slowly replaced.<sup>2</sup>

In 1888, the Levy brothers, of Pennsylvania, perfected a method of making tone plates that is still in common use. They constructed a cross-line screen from two ruled panes of optically perfect glass, set so that the lines intersected at right angles. Placed behind the camera lens, the screen had the effect of breaking the entering light rays into a dot pattern which could be transferred to a sensitized plate and etched in the same manner as a line

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Ernest Hyde, in interview, Sydney, May 1964, and A.T.J., vol.XVI, no.181, p.615. Mr Traill, editor of the Bulletin, brought the new engraving equipment with him on his return from Europe in 1885.

<sup>2</sup>

Wood engravers could simulate tone by ingenious cross-hatching, and artists preparing sketches for photo-engraving who wanted to produce a tone effect had to employ this technique as well.

engraving. This process had certainly reached Australia by the nineties.<sup>1</sup>

Even before the Levys had perfected their screen, another American, Frederick Ives, had applied its principle in the production of the first commercially-useful set of three-colour plates. A red, green or violet colour filter permitted only light of a certain narrow wavelength range to enter the camera through a screen. The negative was used to produce a tone plate which was printed in an ink of complementary colour to the filter. Theoretically, the red, green and violet plates printed in combination with inks of complementary colours could produce any tone value.<sup>2</sup> Mr. J. Patterson was making some experimental use of this tri-chromatic process in Melbourne as early as 1896,<sup>3</sup> but it was not until 1911 that the firm of Hartland and Hyde produced Sydney's first successful set of three-colour plates.<sup>4</sup> By this time the two-revolution printing machines were available to transfer the image to paper with far greater accuracy than the old Wharfedale.<sup>5</sup>

In the United States and Great Britain, competition for work between the new colour letterpress processes and the older lithographic methods forced a revolution in the latter which resulted in the replacement of the stone slab by a flexible grained zinc plate, onto which a photographic image could be developed. With the flexible plate came

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1

Indent book, New South Wales Government Printer, 15 October 1894.

2

In practice it was often necessary to make a fourth plate, to be printed in grey or black.

3

See Collie's Circular, vol.I, no.I, 1896.

4

Mr Ernest Hyde, in interview, May, 1964.

5

Notably the Miehle. Ink-makers also contributed a good deal to the success of the new methods. They evolved a far wider range of colours that remained 'fast' longer, worked more easily in the fine-textured tone plates, and yet dried more quickly on the paper.

the rotary offset machine, which worked somewhat better and several times faster than the flat-beds it replaced.<sup>1</sup> In Sydney, both zinc plate and offset machine were in use by 1914,<sup>2</sup> though the wide application of photographic techniques seems to have come much later. The degree of change was sufficient to meet letterpress competition, and Sydney's small band of lithographic printers grew in numbers at about the same rate as their typographical confreres.<sup>3</sup>

Both letterpress and lithographic processes were put to the service of the rapidly-developing packaging industry. In the new century, Australians bought more luxuries, and manufacturers sought to present them more attractively. Thus New South Wales' production of cigarettes was three times greater in 1913 than in 1901, and the packages and tins that contained them were equipped with colour, illustration, and card. Illustration and colour on labels replaced words in black and white. Printing and packaging became inseparable, and the packaging industry boomed. In 1901, there were only 285 people employed in the making of paper boxes and paper bags in New South Wales; ten years later, there were almost a thousand more.<sup>4</sup>

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1

In the offset process, the inked image on the plate was transferred to a soft blanket which then printed it onto the paper. Offset permitted longer plate life, and greater speed.

2

'An Australian Government Printing Office', in the British and Colonial Printer, 15 January 1905, and A.T.J., no. 498, April 1914, p.18.

3

From 220 in 1901 to 379 in 1911.

4

New South Wales Statistical Registers. The figure for 1911 is 1,235. It is higher than the Census figure quoted in the next page because it includes all persons employed in the industry, and presumably also because cardboard boxmakers recorded themselves under lower Census classifications.

By 1913, the printing industry was more diverse than it had ever been, its range of skills far wider, and the composition of its work force quite different. With the progressive adaptation of the Linotype machine to the needs of the jobbing trade<sup>1</sup> the proportion of compositors to other printing craftsmen declined. The increased output from the composing room required relatively more stereotypers and letterpress machinists, and the new styles in advertising demanded camera operators, lithographic artists and process engravers in increasing numbers.

The proportion of compositors relative to unskilled workers in the industry also decreased. Machine setting and faster press speeds increased the relative numbers of collaters, folders, numberers and staplers. The extension of printing techniques to packaging added large numbers of paper bag and cardboard box makers.<sup>2</sup> A very high proportion of those employed in all these occupations were women.

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1

The most important development in the design of the Linotype was the introduction of double-magazine quick-change equipment. By 1910, one operator, without leaving his seat, could set lines making use of ten complete alphabets, six distinct type faces, twenty different styles of heads, and four different bodies. Machines became capable of setting to increasingly wider measures, and from 1909 the British Linotype Co. offered automatic quadding. Competition between the Mergenthaler Co. and others which built similar 'Linotype' machines was keen. In the years before the war, the most successful competitor was the Intertype Co. The Monotype did not find much favour in Australia.

2

Numbers Employed in Occupations of the Printing Trade in N.S.W.

	1901	1911
Compositor	2,711	2,993
Machinist, Stereotyper, others in printing	849	1,486
Bookbinder, etc.	759	1,735
Others	4	46
Lithographer	220	379
Paper bag, box maker	212	596

Source: The Censuses.

The proportion of women in the printing industry as a whole increased in all the States, but it increased most rapidly in Victoria and N.S.W. In the latter, 27 per cent of all those employed in Books, Paper and Printing in 1913 were women. By then, compositors made up fewer than 42 per cent of all those working in the printing industry. In 1901 they had accounted for 57 per cent, and in 1891, for 63.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the century, typographical societies were almost entirely unions of compositors. Except in New South Wales and Victoria, the other craftsmen of the printing trade scarcely existed in sufficient numbers to warrant unions of their own, and compositors had been unwilling to admit them to their Societies. After 1900 they began to have second thoughts. Membership of stereotypers, machinists and others would provide some badly-needed revenue, and offer the compositors some control over those increasing numbers of employees who were handling type and might therefore learn the trade irregularly. Besides, the admission of other printing craftsmen was consonant with the ideal of the 'closer organization' of Labour. Yet the Typographical Societies did almost nothing about organizing other printing trade workers until after 1908, when circumstances combined to assist and then compel them.

The general acceleration of the printing industry about that time augmented the funds of the Societies to the point where they felt confident about engaging the

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1

Total employment in the printing industry has been calculated by subtracting 'Printers' and 'Publishers' and adding 'Lithographers' and 'Paper Bag and Box Makers' to those 'Working in Books and Publications'. 'Printer' and 'Publisher' were largely proprietorial grades.

staff necessary to organize non-unionists within the printing industry; but more importantly, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland established their first Wages Boards for the printing industry in 1908. These were to fix wages and conditions for each section of the printing industry; each section was to be represented by an equal number of employers and employees. Decisions were to be by majority vote; if the representative of one of the sections voted consistently with the employers, all the decisions would go their way. This might well have resulted in very poor awards for those sections of the industry that so far had no collective arrangement with employers; and the established privileges of compositors were obviously in danger. From 1908, typographical societies acted vigorously in the cause of 'closer organization' of the printing industry, and saw to it that all representatives of employees on the Wages Boards were union men. Thus the Society compositor forwarded the cause of the unity of Labour and conserved his own privileges simultaneously.

Wages Boards also had the effect of re-invigorating master printers' associations that had languished. As they gained strength, they developed far beyond any point they had reached in the eighties as restrictive organizations seeking to reduce competition.<sup>1</sup> By 1913 master printers'

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Without some reliable information about profits in the printing industry, it is impossible to do other than guess at the reasons for enhanced interest in restrictive trade practice among employers. After 1900, some firms outgrew their primitive financial arrangements, and formed themselves into limited companies. See Australasian Printer, January 1953, November 1954: articles on the histories of S.T. Leigh & Co. and Wilke & Co. This process was probably hastened by the need to buy more costly plant and machinery. There was great interest in cost accounting, and the ideas of Taylor and Galbraith.



associations in all States (except perhaps South Australia) had adopted the Typothetae system. It was introduced to Australia by Mr N. Sapsford, who had seen it at work during his trip to the United States in 1900. In his speech as retiring president of the Queensland Master Printers' Association in 1904, Mr Sapsford said:

Unless we combine, it will mean the survival of the man who has the most money to lose, and I maintain it is impossible to do a fair thing by our employees, customers, and ourselves, unless we combine. No one is more anxious to pay better wages than those ruling at the present time than I am, but we all know business will not stand it.<sup>1</sup>

Typothetae's method of improving things was to adopt a scale of prices that fixed minimum charges 'high enough to give us a fair remuneration, without being extortionate'.<sup>2</sup> This did away with 'the absurd practice of giving prices for every little job'.<sup>3</sup> Members of the Typothetae who undercut the scale on quotations would be fined.<sup>4</sup>

The typographical societies were enthusiastic about collusion between master printers to raise profits,<sup>5</sup> on the understanding that more money for the masters meant more money for the men. They were prepared to help them in the ways they had helped them before; by circulating Fair Lists,

<sup>1</sup>

N. Sapsford, Why Printers Should Combine, pamphlet, Brisbane, 1904, p.2.

<sup>2</sup>

N. Sapsford, Printers and the Printing Profession, pamphlet, Brisbane, 1907, p.4.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., p.3.

<sup>4</sup>

Wimble's Reminder, September 1907.

<sup>5</sup>

See A.T.J., no.410, December 1906 on the concurrence of the M.T.S. in price-fixing and no.492, October 1913, on the local Society's approval of the establishment of a local Typothetae.

leasing the Union Label<sup>1</sup> to 'fair' employers, diverting skilled workmen from 'unfair' firms, and policing apprentice quotas.

After 1900, the typographical societies and master printers' associations also co-operated in another way. The expansion of display printing for advertisement and packaging created a stronger demand for compositors with the stone-hand's skill of assembling type and block attractively, and locking it in the forme with perfect pressure. This called for a good deal more judgement and ability than 'type-snatching', and not enough journeymen were skilled in this work.<sup>2</sup> The majority of them had served their time in the turnover-improver schools of the eighties and nineties, and as journeymen untaught were unable either to do the work themselves or teach it to others. Thus from about the turn of the century, masters began to seek the establishment of after-hours technical classes in hand-composing, and then in all the skills of the printing trade.<sup>3</sup> The typographical societies were very happy to co-operate; this recognition of the increased

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1

The Union Label was a device developed by the A.T.U. from American precedent. Societies leased small electrotypes of the A.T.U. badge to 'fair' employers, who added the design to their own imprint.

2

The best description of the change in status and function of the hand-compositor is that given by the Secretary of the N.S.W.T.A., Robert York, to Mr Justice Heydon, in the appeal of the N.S.W.T.A. against the Determination of the Printing Trades Group No.1 Board's Hand Composing Award, in the Court of Industrial Arbitration, 11 March 1913.

3

By 1913, N.S.W., Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia had established technical classes in printing. In N.S.W. and Victoria there were permanent instructors, and in the former, there were classes for both journeymen and apprentices, as well as a correspondence course in hand-composing. Both the M.T.S. and the N.S.W.T.A. presented prizes annually, and publicised the classes' activities.

skill required of printing craftsmen was a good bargaining point in wage negotiations. From 1900, the A.T.J., began to publish technical articles, and encourage pride in skill by running competitions in printing and design.

This emphasis on craft skill encouraged the hand compositor to seek his private solutions to industrial problems by self-promotion of excellence. Piece work similarly encouraged the machine compositor, and the A.T.J. for some years reported the best 'strings' of the men who could 'hang them' on the Linotypes of the morning dailies. Articles on self-improvement began again to find a place in the A.T.J.; the advocates of temperance became prominent again.<sup>1</sup> After 1906, the prospects of establishing a small printing business began to improve once more.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Four of the 'prominent Society men' whose biographical sketches were published in the A.T.J. for 1897 were 'life-long teetotallers', and holders of high Lodge office. The A.T.J. noticed 'a fair proportion of teetotallers' among the delegates to the A.T.U. Triennial Conference, 1898. (Vol.XXIX, no.341, p.5) In 1903, the M.T.S. instructed its delegates to the Trades Hall Council to vote against the acceptance of a 'replica of the Eight Hours Movement' because the donors, Carlton Breweries, had engraved the name of their product on it. (M.T.S. Minutes 16 May 1903) Commenting on the large quantity of hard liquor left over after a Daily Telegraph social outing, the Secretary wrote that '...in these days of "lynetyers", "topers" are increasingly conspicuous by their absence'. (A.T.J., no.499, May 1914, p.20.) W.C. Melbourne, Secretary of the S.A. Branch, and one of the 'Founding Fathers' of the P.I.E.U.A. was a teetotaller, and E.C. Magrath, the most powerful of the new Union's officials, was almost a total abstainer.

2

If we assume that each establishment employing four or fewer workers in the printing industry had one proprietor, proprietors made up the following percentages of all those employed in Books, Paper and Printing in New South Wales:

1901	1.08	1911	1.35
1906	0.78	1913	1.24

Source: Statistical Registers

This reinforcement of the trend to individualism is what Mr Sapsford had in mind when he addressed the Conference of Master Printers in September 1911. He deplored the effect that Wages Boards were having on production costs, and added

The only way by which we can make the times more easy is to get into closer touch with the workman, and wean him away from the influence of the union....If we could induce labour unions to act independently of each other...this would go a great way to settle disputes.<sup>1</sup>

The typographical societies were familiar with Mr Sapsford's principles of action, and worked at their frustration.

#### The Melbourne Typographical Society

In the first years of its recovery, the M.T.S. was content to live very quietly. It closed no offices, co-operated with the Master Printers Association,<sup>2</sup> and evaded the problems associated with an Unemployment Fund by refusing to institute one.<sup>3</sup> Almost its sole concern was the preservation of the Melbourne compositors' privileges. Although successive Conferences of the Australasian Typographical Union recommended organization of the kindred printing trades, the M.T.S. refused to take

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1

Proceedings of the Master Printers' Conference, Melbourne, September 1911, as reported in Wimble's Reminder, November 1911.

2

See Report of Triennial Conference of the A.T.U., in A.T.J., no.352, January 1902, pp.4,5 and M.T.S. Minutes 28 January 1905, on joint action by masters and men for the raising of the tariff on imported printed matter.

3

For the unemployed there was no benefit except for occasional ex gratia donations by the Board from small sums authorised by half-yearly general meetings. The Board also arranged rabbit-trapping excursions, and made arrangements with the Conservator of Forests for the employment of members on forest thinning projects.

any action.<sup>1</sup> From 1902 to 1909, it refused applications for membership from readers, Linotype attendants and Linotype cleaners, and in the latter year indignantly rejected an application for membership as a machine compositor from a man who had picked up a knowledge of the keyboard without regular apprenticeship.<sup>2</sup> In its revision of rules in 1903, it did open membership of the Society to readers and stereotypers, but there is no record of any joining for some time. The only action the M.T.S. took to widen its ranks in these years was to accept responsibility for those unionists in Launceston left over from the collapse of the old North Tasmanian Typographical Society.

Those whose view it was that unions should not meddle in politics remained powerful on the Board of Management. In 1902, the Board divided evenly on a motion to commit the Society to an annual fee of sixpence a member for affiliation to the Political Labor Council. A ballot of members decided for the motion,<sup>3</sup> but such contact as the Society had with the State and Federal Labor Parties was confined to intervention in trade matters, and the results were not always happy.<sup>4</sup> In August 1903, the principle of sending a delegate to Political Labor Congresses was 'affirmed', but even two years later members were only enthusiastic enough

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In April 1902, the A.T.U. Council began direct negotiation with a struggling Melbourne Newspaper Employees Union. In July draft rules for a Printing Federation Council came before the M.T.S., but it took no action (M.T.S. Minutes, 26 July 1902). In this thesis, the terms 'allied trades' and 'kindred trades' are used to refer to all occupations in the printing industry other than composing.

2

M.T.S. Minutes, 22 February 1902, 7 July 1904, 30 August 1909, and 17 September 1904.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 26 July, 2 August and 10 October 1902.

4

E.g. M.T.S. Minutes, 21 February 1903, on 'computing' of time docketts at the Government Printing Office; 20 June 1903, protest over Labor members' attitude to 'non-official' deputations of compositors.

to donate £2.2s. to the Political Labor Council's 'self-denial' appeal.<sup>1</sup>

The Society's main interest in this period was the pursuit of its fortunes through Determinations of the Wages Board. The first of these came into force on 1 January 1902, but the Board subsequently made some changes, and the amended Determination came into force on 4 August of that year. Principally, it provided for a minimum wage of 52 shillings for a week of 48 hours for compositors, letterpress machinists and stereotypers, and 70 shillings for a week of 42 hours for Linotype and Monoline operators. There was no gain here, except that all employers in the industry were now obliged by law to pay these rates at least. Where the Society found most comfort was in the provision limiting apprentices or improvers to its general proportion of one for the House and thenceforth one to every three journeymen.<sup>2</sup>

The members of the M.T.S. did not benefit from this clause for long. The Factory Act that had fathered the Wages Boards expired in 1902, and when the Factory Act Renewal Bill finally passed the Legislative Council in 1903, it was shorn of the clauses that permitted the Board to fix a ratio of apprentices to journeymen. In their place were clauses permitting the award of three year apprenticeships, and the issue of permits to those seeking to work at less than the minimum rates. There

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At this stage, the M.T.S. had over £4,500 to its credit.

2

This determination did not apply to daily newspapers. Daily newspaper employees had long enjoyed wages and conditions superior to those minimums provided by the Determination.

was also a new provision for the setting-up of an Industrial Appeals Court. The M.T.S. sought a Conference with the V.M.P.A., but the Masters saw no need to discuss the Act.<sup>1</sup>

A year and a half later the M.T.S. took industrial action to raise its members' wages. In May 1906 a mass meeting instructed the trades' delegates to call the Wages Board together to award a three pounds minimum wage for the hand compositor. The Society claimed it had shown considerable restraint; moreover, the cost of living was rising. The Board decided a four shillings rise was justified, and awarded £2.16.0. The Master Printers' Association appealed, but after some remarks in chambers from the Judge of the Industrial Appeals Court, decided to withdraw. This victory kept the M.T.S. happy enough with the Wages Board, despite its lack of power over apprentices. In February 1907 it recommended to Federal Labor Conference the extension of the Factory Act and Wages Board system to Tasmania, and the restoration of the power to fix apprenticeship ratios.

By this time, the Society was already increasing quite rapidly in membership and strength, and this trend accelerated. The balance sheet for the Half-Yearly General Meeting of 1906, showed assets of £4,546; by the Annual General Meeting of 1910 these had increased to £7,000, and by August 1913 they stood at £10,300, with only eight per cent of a membership of 1800 not financial. In 1909, the members elected Robert Elliott as the Society's first organizer<sup>2</sup> and in August 1910 they

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1

M.T.S. Minutes, 22 October 1904.

2

He became General Secretary in 1912 after an administrative re-organization.

inaugurated a separate Defence Fund by transferring £3,500 from the General Fund.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first signs of the Society's confidence was its willingness to resume the responsibility of an Unemployment Fund. The Half-Yearly General Meeting of 1905 put forward a temporary scheme on the lines of the Fund that had been suspended in 1893, with a proviso that not more than £400 should be spent on relief in any one year. It was adopted by ballot in October, its provisions liberalized early in 1907, and finally made permanent in the following September. In 1910, the Half-Yearly General Meeting noted that the £400 was no longer being used up in relief, and voted to allow the surplus to accumulate.<sup>2</sup>

Industrially, the Society's increasing strength was reflected in the progress of the closed shop and a disposition to make its Rules more restrictive. In March 1905 the Board informed an enquiring employer that he could be placed on the Fair List only if he abided by Society rules and saw that all his eligible employees were members of the Society.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there was a steady flow of applications for placement on the Fair List and the lease of the Union Label. Despite the limitations of the Wages Board system, the M.T.S. after 1905 got pretty much its own way in what it regarded as two crucial matters: the limitation of apprentices, and the restriction of technical education to indentured boys only.

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The purpose of this was to ensure that money readily available for 'trade' matters would never fall below a certain minimum.

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A.T.J., no.459, August 1910, p.5. This is further evidence for assuming that unemployment was clearing up rather rapidly by then.

3

The Modern Printery. M.T.S. Minutes, 18 March 1905.



From the late eighties, the Working Men's College had offered courses after hours to those anxious to improve themselves, and the M.T.S. had encouraged apprentices to attend. But there were no courses in printing until 1898, when the Master Printers' Association organized classes.<sup>1</sup> The Working Men's College took these over early in 1899, and began instruction in both composing and machining.

The M.T.S. was enthusiastic. It considered that technical education could raise the status of the journeyman, and that higher wages would follow.<sup>2</sup> It went so far as to recommend that training in the classes at the Working Men's College be compulsory, and conducted in daylight hours.<sup>3</sup> But it did insist that classes be confined to indentured apprentices, and that the composing classes be confined to hand work. The Working Men's College fulfilled these conditions.<sup>4</sup>

The Society, then, was able to keep a fairly close rein on the number of entrants into the composing trade. It made it known that despite the suspension of the apprentice proportion clause of the 1902 Determination, it recognized only its own ratios. The new Linotype Rules of 1907 confirmed Society practice that no apprentice was to work a composing machine until his final year, and then only for a maximum of thirty weeks.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., vol.XXVIII, no.338, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., no.423, January 1908, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 7 and 11 February 1907.

<sup>4</sup> See A.T.J., vol.XXVIII, no.338, p.3 and vol.XXX, no.346, p.4. The M.T.S. kept a close watch on Linotype 'schools' and none of those projected in this period got under way.

<sup>5</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 14 December 1907.

Employers who wished to have their names on the Fair List had to accede to these conditions. That the M.T.S. was confident of success in these matters was attested by the Report of the Committee on the Excess of Apprentices, which said in part:

We are convinced that no office is prepared to quarrel with the Society on this question, and that by determined action the object we have in view (the establishment of Society apprentice conditions throughout Melbourne) can be obtained.<sup>1</sup>

As the Society began to sense its power, so it became more prepared to take a firmer line in other matters concerned with the restriction of labour. The Half-Yearly General Meeting of August 1907 resolved that owing to unemployment occasioned by the introduction of labour-saving machinery, the daily hours of labour should be reduced to six. The next General Meeting instructed the Board to consider the question; on 14 March 1908 it decided that the recognized working hours each week should be forty-four, and that the minimum weekly wage for all journeymen other than machine compositors should be 65 shillings. After the Wages Board had heard this claim, its chairman gave his casting vote for a reduction of weekly working hours to 45, and the employers' representatives walked out. The Minister of Labour intervened, and the Board reassembled, but the remainder of the Chairman's decisions went heavily against the Society. Its representatives having secured an adjournment, the M.T.S. called a mass meeting which condemned the proposed Determination. It decided that a reduction in

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<sup>1</sup>

In M.T.S. Minutes, 4 April 1908. The words in brackets are mine.

hours of work was less important than an increase in wages, declared that nothing less than a three pounds minimum was acceptable, and resolved that should the Master Printers' Association not accede, then it would call another meeting to determine on further action.<sup>1</sup>

The 'further action' was a strike. On 21 August a ballot showed that 672 members out of 893 voting were in favour of sending in their notices on 4 September, and when that day came, less than half-a-dozen failed to do so. Under this pressure, the Master Printers came to terms, and agreed to a minimum of £3 for a forty-eight hour week for hand compositors, and for some machinists.<sup>2</sup> This agreement arrived at by direct negotiation was subsequently registered with the Wages Board.

The dispute of 1909 was the beginning of a series of incidents that confirmed the Society's decision to rely mainly upon its own industrial power. Early in 1911, the Country Press Association applied for the setting-up of a Country Wages Board, now provided for under a recent amendment to the Factories Act. The M.T.S. took the view that country determinations should be arrived at simply by extending the jurisdiction of the present Metropolitan Board to country areas. The Minister agreed, and both the

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M.T.S. Minutes, 31 July 1909.

2

This account relies on the report in A.T.J., no.443, September 1909, p.5. Only those machinists in charge of machines over double-demy size were to receive the £3. The M.T.S. later compensated the others by a £10 grant for their loyalty. The reluctance to haggle over hours, and the fact that the reduction of working week was not again raised as a matter of dispute for some years is further prima facie evidence for the contention that employment improved fairly rapidly about this time.

Country Press Association and the M.T.S. circulated tickets among country printing employees for the election of their representatives. The Society's ticket - which included its President and Organizer - was elected. The Country Press Association representatives withdrew from the Board, and when the Minister called for new employers' representatives, he could find no one we would come forward. By August, the Society was compelled to back down. In place of its original team, it selected five country workers whom it described as 'trustworthy'. The result was a very poor determination - so poor that the M.T.S. had little trouble in inducing the employers in private conference to raise the minimum it provided by another five shillings. A subsequent appeal to the Industrial Appeals Court resulted in another three shillings being added.<sup>1</sup>

The Country Award determination was not the only aspect of the Wages Board system that the M.T.S. found displeasing in these years. In 1911, it took part in conferences on the restoration of powers to fix apprentice ratios to the Wages Board. This power was indeed restored, but in such a way that the M.T.S. considered it worse than useless, because the proportion of apprentices was to be calculated as a fraction of those employees earning over £2.16s. - and a journeyman compositor earned not less than

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., no.460-1, February and March 1911, pp.6 and 7, no.465-468, July-September 1911, pp.4, 6 and 7, no.480-1, October-November 1911, pp.6 and 6, and no.492, October 1913, p.4. The base rate first awarded was £2 for a week of 48 hours for a hand compositor - i.e. two thirds of the city rate. Quite apart from cost of living differences it is difficult to make a direct comparison with the N.S.W. Country Award, because it paid rates which depended on the town's population. The comparable base rates in N.S.W. were £2.5.0. for a town with a population of less than 3,000; £2.7.6. in towns with a population of 3,000 to 6,000; and £2.10.0. for towns with a population above 6,000.

three pounds.<sup>1</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the Wages Board was not the only reason for a considerable strengthening of the M.T.S.'s preference for direct negotiation in this period. There was its own increasing wealth and strength, and the increasing demand for skilled labour. As in the late eighties, the Society began to flex its muscles. When in May 1912 members of the Master Printers' Association began to issue Certificates of Discharge to some of their ex-employees, the M.T.S. instructed its members not to receive or pass on the certificates, and sent its decision to the M.P.A. The M.P.A. replied by the next meeting that these Certificates had not been intended for members of the M.T.S., and any issued to them had been issued in error.<sup>2</sup> Two months later, the Board of Management received notification from Sands and McDougall's Chapel

That the members of this Chapel pledge themselves to oppose any future proposals for an agreement between the M.T.S. and the A.T.U. and the Master Printers which would have the effect of preventing unionists from using their organized power to better their industrial conditions in any direction and at any time they may deem expedient.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of 1912, successive votes of money to the Defence Fund had raised it to £5,000, and when the 1909 Determination became due for renewal in 1913, the Society commenced direct negotiation with the M.P.A. The result

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., no.466, August 1911, p.5.

<sup>2</sup>

M.T.S. Minutes, 11 May and 22 June 1912.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., 24 August 1912. Sands and McDougall's was at this time the largest printing factory in Melbourne, apart from the daily newspaper offices.

was a minimum rate of £3.6s. for hand compositors, machinists, and stereotypers. This agreement, duly registered by the Court as its Determination, provided the best rates in Australia for commercial printers.<sup>1</sup>

As the Society began to rely more on strike strategy it took somewhat more interest in the closer organization of the whole printing trade. From 1908 to 1910, the Board of Management dismissed applications for admission from envelope makers, machinists' assistants, and feeders.<sup>2</sup> Then at the 1910 Triennial Conference of the A.T.U., two of the M.T.S.'s delegates, Mr Organizer Elliott<sup>3</sup> and Mr President Sanderson,<sup>4</sup> moved that the Conference 'declare for the principle of amalgamating all branches of the trade', and requested that a Committee be set up to report on a method.<sup>5</sup>

Less than six months later, the Printing Trade General Workers' Union held its inaugural meeting in Melbourne. It was the successor to the old Newspaper

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In money and real terms. See Appendix B

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M.T.S. Minutes, 15 August 1908, 15 May 1909, 19 September 1910.

3

Robert Elliott: Born 1864, Hawick, Scotland; compositor, apprenticed at eleven; first Organizer, M.T.S., 1909; Secretary M.T.S., 1912-16; Secretary, V.T.S., 1916-21; Secretary Victorian Branch P.I.E.U.A., 1921-31; Vice-President, P.I.E.U.A., 1922, 1924-25, 1927-30; died December 1931. Mr Elliott was also a foundation member of Essendon Branch A.L.P., and a director of the Industrial Printing Co.

4

Tom Sanderson: Born 1864; apprenticed Yorkshire Post; arrived Melbourne, early eighties; President, M.T.S., 1897-1903, 1910-11; member, Printers' Wages Board, 1901-21; Treasurer, M.T.S., V.T.S. and Victorian Branch P.I.E.U.A., 1912-22; died August 1926.

5

A.T.J., no.452, June 1910, p.5.

Employees' Union, and it was open to

Stereotypers, Rotary Machinists, Paper Dampers, Publishers, Warehousemen, and general workers in any establishment connected with the printing and publishing industry for whom a craft Union does not exist

- in other words, to all those people the M.T.S. had been refusing to accept as members for a decade.<sup>1</sup> The organizer of the meeting was Mr Robert Elliott. Chairman of the meeting and its first President was Mr Tom Sanderson.<sup>2</sup>

No matter how desirable it was that unindentured men in the industry should be organized, the M.T.S. would not have then in its own ranks. It made only one exception, and then for the sake of completing the organization of the daily newspaper composing room. After a brush with newspaper proprietors over the payment of increased time rates in August, the Board authorized the admission of readers' assistants, few if any of whom had served any time to the composing trade.<sup>3</sup> The Board decided to admit them on the condition that they would not change their occupation in the industry without permission of the Board of Management.

At the inaugural meeting of the Printing Trade General Workers' Union, Tom Sanderson had hinted at some

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P.T.G.W.U. Rule Book. The M.T.S. accepted stereotypers, but not those employed in newspaper offices. Stereotypers in jobbing offices had often been indentured as compositors. The P.T.G.W.U. renamed itself the Victorian Printing Operatives' Union.

2

P.T.G.W.U., Minutes, 24 September 1910.

3

M.T.S. Minutes, 16 December 1911. As readers' assistants, it was possible they had picked up some knowledge of machine composing, and were therefore potential strike-breakers. Readers had been eligible for Society membership since 1904, and in May 1911 the Executive had ordered a drive on their recruitment.

future amalgamation of the printing craft unions with it. In the winter of 1912, such an amalgamation came a little closer. The P.T.G.W.U. and the craft unions met as an Allied Printing Trades Council to discuss action to be taken on the M.P.A.'s Certificate of Discharge, and while in session resolved on the drawing-up of a constitution for a permanent Council.<sup>1</sup> But a year later nothing had been done; and when the Bookbinders approached the M.T.S. with a request to join them in their negotiations with the M.P.A. on an agreement to replace the 1909 determination, they were rebuffed.<sup>2</sup> From that date, the Allied Council remained moribund until revived by the Bookbinders a few years later.

Similarly, the M.T.S. concerned itself less with the labour movement at large as its industrial strength increased. It abandoned an interest it had shown in the Industrial Workers of the World,<sup>3</sup> and maintained its contact with other unions only through donations to their strike appeals,<sup>4</sup> and by representation on Trades Hall Council. Its delegates were dutiful but inconspicuous, and the Society never concerned itself very much with their views or those of the Council. Its affiliation with

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., no.476, June 1913, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., no.489, May 1913, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> M.T.S. Minutes, 19 September 1908.

<sup>4</sup> The M.T.S. was a generous donor. In 1909, it gave £920 - about one third of Victoria's total donation - to the miners in the Broken Hill strike. This was its most notable effort, but on at least three other occasions it gave over £100 to strikers.



the Labor Party had the same quality of loyalty without enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup> It took no interest in organizations seeking to criticize and re-direct the labour movement<sup>2</sup> and contributed only grudgingly to the campaign to establish a Labor daily newspaper.<sup>3</sup> The Society's political reaction in this time of returning strength was very like its reaction in the late eighties, when confident of its own power it had withdrawn from the labour movement it had earlier led.

Among the typographical societies, the M.T.S.'s pattern of recovery was unique. As far as possible, it ignored State wage-fixing machinery. It relied on threat of strike as its most powerful bargaining force, but also followed what was virtually a policy of industrial isolationism. In terms of wages won and privileges secured, this militant separatism proved highly effective; but it was archaic. Other typographical societies followed politics very much like those of the New South Wales Typographical Association.

#### The New South Wales Typographical Association

In the first few years of the century, when unemployment among compositors was still heavy, the N.S.W.T.A. strengthened itself by practising economy and caution. With memories of

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The Society remained affiliated, and in 1912 carried a ballot for a donation to electoral expenses by 547 votes to 197.

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e.g., M.T.S. Minutes, 26 July 1913. Pamphlets protesting against the compulsory military training clauses of the Defence Act were received, but no action was taken.

3

The ballot to decide on buying shares in Labor Papers Limited was carried by 429 votes to 336, a majority of only 93 (A.T.J., no.465, July 1911, p.4). The levy proved difficult to collect; some members resigned rather than pay, and other challenged the Board's legal right to collect with impunity.

the various effects of unemployment benefit payments ten years previously, members in September 1902 adopted a scheme that paid only half the benefit of the old scheme, and that only to the extent of £100 in any one year.<sup>1</sup> Both Board and General Meetings resisted any attempts to enlarge the scheme, or any revision of the Rules that would grant the unemployed greater representation in the government of the association.<sup>2</sup> When the State Government first notified its intention of establishing printing classes at Sydney Technical College, George Jones reminded members that 'It would be (their) duty to apply for admission to the classes, and so shut out the non-practical applicants'.<sup>3</sup> Strikes were not to be thought of. The Association continued its policy of extending the Fair List, and excluding non-unionists from what shops they could. By July 1902 it was necessary for firms to employ only Association men if they wished to be placed on the List. That this policy made further headway with each year is demonstrated by the increase in membership from 300 at 30 June 1902 to 799 at 30 June 1907.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the Association's success in inducing firms to join the Fair List seems to have been the result of employers considering that the newly-established Arbitration Court would soon produce a common rule for

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<sup>1</sup>

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 6 September 1902.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 28 January 1905 and 30 July 1904

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., 28 July 1902

<sup>4</sup>

No Fair Lists dated later than June 1902 survive. It is assumed here that unemployment benefits were not attractive enough to encourage membership, and that a healthy proportion of new joiners were those with job prospects in union shops.

the printing industry. The N.S.W.T.A. registered under the Act on 29 February 1902, and soon after began negotiations with the Master Printers' Association. After this failed, the N.S.W.T.A. filed a claim in the Court for a minimum wage for the hand-compositor of £3 for 48 hours in June 1903. About the same time, it managed to negotiate an Agreement with the Sydney Daily Newspaper Employers' Association, which largely re-affirmed conditions of the 1894 Daily Telegraph Agreement.<sup>1</sup>

The Court's list of cases was long, and the Association had to wait very patiently as 1903 passed, and 1904 as well. Then in 1905 three appeal decisions in the High Court severely curbed the power of the N.S.W.T.A. Arbitration Court to grant effective preference, establish a common rule, or even hear cases at all.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the last decision, the Association's claim lapsed.<sup>3</sup> Even before this was certain, the Association had abandoned the idea of getting the Daily Newspaper Employers into Court over alleged breaches of the Agreement.<sup>4</sup>

The N.S.W.T.A. then attempted direct negotiation. With the Daily Newspaper Employers' Association, it reached

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1

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 19 March 1904. The 1894 Agreement had applied only at the Telegraph, and had not been well observed there.

2

In the last of these (Brown's Case, 3 C.L.R. 255), it was held that the Court 'did not have jurisdiction to deal with industrial disputes between a union and its employers, but only with industrial disputes between members of the union and their employers' - J.M. Portus, The Development of Australian Trade Union Law, Melbourne, 1958, p.110.

3

See letter of Thomas Rose, Solicitor, to the Secretary N.S.W.T.A., 5 March 1906. It suggests that the main value of the Court to the Association lay in whatever power it had to grant a common rule.

4

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 28 September 1905.

another Agreement which raised the piece rate to 3¼d. a thousand ens, and eliminated all 'fat', although it retained certain penalty rates.<sup>1</sup> It did not reach an agreement with the Master Printers' Association and resuscitated its claim in the Court in May in the form necessary to meet the new legal requirements. When the N.S.W.T.A. finally did manage to prove jurisdiction in October, the Masters offered a compromise which the Association accepted by ballot. The resulting agreement became the first Court award for hand-composing in N.S.W. and set a pattern for all succeeding awards.

Since 1894, the N.S.W.T.A. and the Master Printers' Association had agreed on a minimum rate of £2.12s. for a working week of 48 hours, but payment for overtime and apprentice ratios had varied from shop to shop. The Award provided for a minimum wage of £2.16s. standardized payment for overtime at one third extra until midnight, and set the ratio of apprentices at one for the House and thereafter one for each three journeymen to a limit of seven apprentices. Agreements prior to 1894 had done much the same; the novel feature of this Award was that it applied as a common rule, and not merely to members of the M.P.A. and the N.S.W.T.A. From 1 January 1908 no employer of hand compositors in the County of Cumberland or the police districts of Newcastle and Maitland could infringe the provisions of the Award without becoming liable to prosecution. The N.S.W.T.A. was pleased with this result, and it is worth noting that the M.P.A. was

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<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., no.419, September 1907, p.5, and N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 27 July 1907. 'Fat' had been the subject of the alleged breaches of Agreement.

as well.<sup>1</sup>

The N.S.W.T.A. concentrated on the conservation of its members' immediate interests to the point where it took little interest in promoting the welfare of its fellow craftsmen. It continued to dominate the Printing Trades Federation Council, but did nothing to pursue the Council's aim of organizing those printers in the allied trades who were still without unions.<sup>2</sup> A Female Bookbinders Union and a Cardboard Box Factory Female Employees Union were formed, but without the help of the N.S.W.T.A.<sup>3</sup> Worse, the Association came into dispute with the Lithographers and Bookbinders on half a dozen occasions in matters where the interests of the letterpress and lithographic trades conflicted.<sup>4</sup> When the Printing Trade Federation Council suggested early in 1907 that the printing trade make a joint approach to the M.P.A. for a £3 minimum wage, the Board refused.<sup>5</sup>

The Board's action followed from its caution. The Lithographers at that point were conducting a small strike in support of their demand for a £3 minimum; to have

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See Minutes of the N.S.W. Master Printers and Connected Trades Association, Report for 1907, 10 February 1908. The common rule was granted on 13 November 1907; the N.S.W.T.A.'s Secretary, Mr E.H. Hurley, who over the years had done most of the work connected with the claim, died on his way to the Court that granted the rule.

2

The Stereotypers' Union was allowed to collapse (N.S.W.T.A. Annual Report in Minutes, 31 January 1903) without intervention by the Association.

3

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 29 September 1906.

4

E.g., see P.T.F.C. Minutes, 24 February 1903 and 26 April 1909 on the issue of Fair Lists.

5

P.T.F.C. Minutes, 19 February 1907; N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 2 March 1907.

joined with them would almost certainly have meant support for their strike action, and a breach of the Arbitration Act. It might well have involved the N.S.W.T.A. in some strike action itself.<sup>1</sup> The whole business came up again when the Lithographers struck in the following September over apprenticeship issues. Mr Spicer, one of the delegates from the N.S.W.T.A. and President of the P.T.F.C. read the Council Section 34 of the Arbitration Act, and another Typographical delegate moved to establish a committee to mediate with the M.P.A.<sup>2</sup>

The P.T.F.C. and the N.S.W.T.A. parted company on other points as well. On 14 March 1905 the P.T.F.C. carried a motion sympathizing with the Russian strikers of that year, but the N.S.W.T.A. would not commit itself that far, although it was requested to donate to a fund in their aid.<sup>3</sup> The request came from the International Socialist Club, whose paper was edited by Mr Harry Holland, a member of the N.S.W.T.A.<sup>4</sup> Harry Holland stood for militant socialism and the doctrine of revolution; it is the quickest measure of the Board's temper to state that they did not once accede

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The Minutes of the P.T.F.C. are (deliberately?) vague on the matter of the Lithographers' Strike, but see the reference to 'principle pay' 19 March 1907, and also N.S.W. Master Printers and Connected Trades Association's Sixth Annual Report.

2

P.T.F.C. Minutes, 24 September 1907. Section 34 of the Arbitration Act 1901 provided a fine of £1,000 or imprisonment for two months for persons striking or assisting a strike before a reasonable time for its reference to the Court had elapsed, or during the hearing of the dispute.

3

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 6 May 1905.

4

On the life of Harry Holland, see P.J. O'Farrell, Harry Holland, Militant Socialist, Canberra, 1964.

to any suggestion or request he or his group made.<sup>1</sup> Instead they pledged their support for those institutions that Mr Holland and the Socialist groups continually criticized as leading the working class astray: the parliamentary Labor Party, whom they supported with regular donations and helped in election campaigns; and the Sydney Labor Council, with whom they remained affiliated through these years - although they reserved the right to abstain from any of its propositions that they considered too radical, or likely to increase its power over its constituent unions.<sup>2</sup>

Like the Melbourne Typographical Society, the N.S.W.T.A. took less interest in the labour movement as the economy recovered. In Sydney, this resulted from somewhat different circumstances. Unions of unskilled workers were more powerful on the Sydney Labor Council than on the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, and its policy was more militant. Close involvement in its schemes would have prejudiced relations with the Master Printers' Association which by 1908 had reached the point of collusion. At the hearing of its claim in the Arbitration Court, the N.S.W.T.A. had produced only a token amount of evidence. Both sides then approached the Court with a proposition for an Award by consent. This procedure permitted the Court to do what it could not have done had both parties approached it with an Agreement for filing - to grant a common rule. Thus the Association achieved what it had never been able to achieve before by negotiation or strike; and the larger and 'fairer' printers who were the strength of the M.P.A. were relieved from competition by printers who 'sweated' their men. The common rule provided for

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1

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 8 February 1902 and 2 June 1906.

2

e.g., its plans for a procession of the unemployed, A.T.J., no.379, May 1905, p.12, and its proposals for an unemployment fund, N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 4 June 1903.

every condition the N.S.W.T.A. sought except the £3 minimum.

If it wished to benefit by the Award, the Association had to abide by arbitration procedure, and forswear the settlement of disputes by striking. Since other unions affiliated with the Printing Trades Federation Council did not consider themselves so bound, the N.S.W.T.A. used its influence to prevent them from planning any strike which could involve N.S.W.T.A. members in stopping work as well. This is one reason why the other unions of the P.T.F.C. grew increasingly hostile towards the N.S.W.T.A., and why its leadership suffered repeated attacks between 1901 and 1914.

The enmity of the P.T.F.C. unions increased as the N.S.W.T.A. began to absorb additional sections of printing workers. In 1909, the Printing Trades Federation Council changed its Rules so that any union whose members were employed in the printing industry was eligible to join it. The Process Engravers' Union joined,<sup>1</sup> and so did the Publishers' Union.<sup>2</sup> The N.S.W.T.A. saw its awards and agreements endangered, and from 1909 to 1914 admitted by resolution of general meetings Stereotypers, Readers and Readers' Assistants, Publishers and Rotary Machinists. Frank Bryant, the Association's First Organizer, began a vigorous campaign of recruitment. The new members were organized in trade sections, and each was granted an Advisory Committee. But these had no autonomy, and could only deal with matters that the Board of Management referred to them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., no.438, May 1909, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> P.T.F.C. Minutes, 23 August 1910.

<sup>3</sup> See Rules of the Machine Composing and Newspaper Advisory Committee, formed out of the old Linotype Advisory Committee, N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 25 April 1908; and the Board's decision on the Publishers' Advisory Committee, N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 30 March 1912.



The Association also added 300 country members in these years. In September 1909, the N.S.W.T.A. persuaded the Country Press Association that they should jointly request the establishment of a Country Wages Board. In the new year, with the President and Organizer of the N.S.W.T.A. as two of its members, the Board began a long tour through the towns of N.S.W. to take evidence. It often found the hand composing trade hanging on in a depressing condition: compositors worked as long as 55 hours, and earned as little as 25 shillings for a week's work. In November, the Association prepared its claim for a Country Award.<sup>1</sup> Six months later, the Board granted a minimum wage of £2.5s. for 48 hours, with a provision that in towns with a population above 6,000, the minimum should be £2.10.0.<sup>2</sup>

The Association also obtained Awards and Agreements for its other new members, and by 1913 it was involved continuously in the negotiation and policing of over a dozen of them. Despite the confusion of details, it is clear that the Association managed either to raise wages, or shorten hours, or do both, in every trade section that it covered.

In some sections it did conspicuously better than others. From 1908 to 1913, the hand composing minimum wage rose from £2.16.0. to £3.5.0., an amount that did very little better than keep pace with the rising cost of living. On the other hand, the Sunday Times rotary machinists received an average increase of 18s.6d. when

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<sup>1</sup>  
A.T.J., no.457, November 1910

<sup>2</sup>  
The N.S.W.T.A. accepted the view that the country industry could not afford to pay city rates.

their first agreement was negotiated in 1912.<sup>1</sup>

In its efforts to reduce hours, the Association's Executive scored one failure and several victories. It failed in its application to have the number of hours worked by hand compositors reduced from 48 to 44 in 1913, but it did succeed in keeping scarce labour scarce in a number of ways. All Awards provided for an initial overtime penalty of time and a third, and double time for work on public holidays. Awards and Agreements recognized that the hours of work by night should be fewer than those by day, and that the hourly-rate should be higher. Thus an Award gazetted on 21 May 1912 set stereotypers' wages at £3 for 48 hours by day, and £3.10s. per week of 36 hours at night.<sup>2</sup> The maximum working week for machine compositors was set at 45 hours by variation of the Machine Composition Award granted in 1911, and operation of the machine by boys guarded against by provisions establishing the Association's apprentice proportion, and forbidding apprenticeships to machine composing only. By 1912, one newspaper agreement at least provided for a fortnight's paid holiday each year.<sup>3</sup>

Newspaper agreements were markedly superior to the commercial awards, and they were negotiated with surprising and even suspicious ease. The Stereotypers' claim made on the Daily Newspaper Employers in 1910 came back as the Agreement, and the same thing happened with the Readers' Agreement a year later. What the proprietors got in return

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1

Average male earnings in the Book Paper and Printing Industry in N.S.W. was £141.2s.9d. for the year 1913 - the second highest-paid group. Those in the Surgical Instrument Makers group earned £8 more. See N.S.W. Year Book, 1914.

2

These night rates were the same as those provided for in the newspaper agreements.

3

Half-Yearly General Meeting, 27 July 1912, reported in A.T.J., no.478, August 1912, p.9.

was vigorous action by the Executive to prevent strikes. In 1909, for example, the Daily Telegraph chapel complained that the proprietors were breaching the Agreement by employing boys at night. The President, Mr W. Ratcliffe, pointed out to the Father of the Chapel the legitimate means at his disposal, and concluded '...but you cannot strike. You understand me, Mr Middleton. You cannot strike.'<sup>1</sup> The Minutes record no strike in any section of the industry until May 1915.

Despite this, strikes were sometimes threatened. At the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Industrial Arbitration, Robert York remarked (perhaps more in sorrow than in anger) that he thought it was impossible to keep men from striking, and gave evidence strongly suggesting that the threat of refusing to work with a non-unionist was often used to add to the membership of the union.<sup>2</sup> Mr William Brooks, President of the Master Printers' Association, and witness for the Employers' Federation, had this to say :

15562... A: The Unions have a very great deal of power, and in some cases where they have failed to secure certain regulations they have asked for, and on which they have been specifically beaten before the Board, they use the power of the Union to force these conditions on the industry outside of the Award.

15563... Q: I suppose what you really mean is that this involves threatening to do something illegal - to strike?

A: Yes

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1

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 4 August 1909.

2

Royal Commission of Inquiry on Industrial Arbitration in the State of New South Wales, Final Report, Evidence Q. & A. 7455 and Q. & A. 7318, 7319 in New South Wales Parliamentary Papers, Second Session, 1913, vol.I.

In view of the several unspecific references in the Minutes to Mr Brooks's office being more trouble than the rest put together, it is highly likely that this gentleman's testimony drew on his own experience. 1913 was a year in which a good many strikes took place in other industries, and it seems unlikely that Chapels where Executive control was not strong - like Brooks's - did not at least make use of the threat. Even if the men's bluff was called, after 1909 they were unlikely to have incurred any heavy penalty.<sup>1</sup> Though the Executive discontinued strike action, members still made use of it.

But during the Presidencies of Messrs Ratcliffe and Middleton, from 1908 to 1913, the Executive remained opposed to involvement with the labour movement. At his testimonial in 1908, Frank Bryant, consistently elected as the Association's first delegate to the Labor Council, and a Council Past President said:

There was no time or use now for the individual union. Any society that tried to stand aloof would find itself crushed to the wall, for organized Labour must stand together, and show an organized front to organized capital.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of that year, the Labor Council revised its Rules to provide for a closer organization of Labour with itself as the governing body. The N.S.W.T.A. refused to subscribe to the new Rules, to the point of threatening

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1

Despite the strong penal provisions of the 1908 Act most fines for striking were about £5. See *Hardman v. Saunders*, *Payne v. Macnamara* and others, and *Stuart v. Cooley*, in N.S.W. Industrial Arbitration Reports and Records, 1910-12. Perhaps this is why, later in his evidence, Mr Brooks referred to penal provisions as 'useless', and advocated 'the extreme penalty of the law' for strikers.

2

S.L.C. Minutes, 5 March 1908.

disaffiliation.<sup>1</sup> It was not going to grant sovereignty over its hard-won privileges to anybody.

This was really no surprise. Earlier in 1908, Parliament had replaced the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1901 with the Industrial Disputes Act. The Sydney Labor Council took violent exception to some of its clauses and issued a circular which recommended that unions refuse to register under the Act, and that 'the method of the strike be relied on as the only means of securing fair and reasonable terms.'<sup>2</sup> The Executive of the N.S.W.T.A. ignored the Circular, and recommended registration.<sup>3</sup> Their decision 'staggered' Frank Bryant; but the Board of Management, mindful of the nineties and anxious to protect their newly-won Award, accepted it almost unanimously.<sup>4</sup> In November, the Executive recommended that no money be voted to assist the wives and children of the striking Rockchoppers, or to aid the legal defence of the men being prosecuted under the Industrial Dispute Act. Mr Otter, Vic-President, thought that 'If they (had been) in the right, it would have been different.' Mr Ratcliffe 'could see no use for strikes.'<sup>5</sup>

The Executive persisted in this attitude through two strikes which won almost unanimous support from other unions affiliated with the Labor Council. In January 1909

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<sup>1</sup>

Its principal objection was to Rule 8, which would have bound it to a Council decision to strike.

<sup>2</sup>

S.L.C. Minutes, 9 April 1908.

<sup>3</sup>

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 20 June 1908.

<sup>4</sup>

Ibid., 20 June and 12 July 1908.

<sup>5</sup>

Ibid., 28, 7 and 11 November 1908.

the Executive opposed a motion to donate £25 to the miners at Broken Hill on the grounds that it was doubtful whether they had struck, or been locked out.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, at the time of the Brisbane General Strike, the Sydney Labor Council decided unanimously that 'the services of the Council's Executive Committee be placed at the disposal of the Brisbane Strike Committee in any way deemed advisable.'<sup>2</sup> A fortnight later, at a General Meeting of the N.S.W.T.A., President Middleton 'on behalf of the Executive stated most emphatically that any kind of a general strike cannot be recognized', and a motion to put the question of donating £100 to a ballot of members was narrowly defeated.<sup>3</sup>

The chief opponents of the Executive and its policy over these years were S.J. Stanbridge and E.C. Magrath.<sup>4</sup> They took the view that the N.S.W.T.A. had obligations to the labour movement, as well as to its own members. At the meeting that discussed the Brisbane General Strike, Magrath told members that 'The Brisbane struggle was part of a world-wide fight and should have our support.' Stanbridge's belief in the importance of industrial action

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 28 January 1909.

<sup>2</sup> S.L.C. Minutes, 1 February 1912.

<sup>3</sup> N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 17 February 1912.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen James Stanbridge: Born 1867, Fairy Meadow, N.S.W.; Vice-President, N.S.W.T.A., 1914-16; President, N.S.W. Branch P.I.E.U.A., 1916-19; first President P.I.E.U.A. 1916-17; Vice-President, P.I.E.U.A., 1920; trustee, P.I.E.U.A., 1946-52.

Edward Crawford Magrath: Born 1881; President, N.S.W.T.A., 1914; Organizer, N.S.W.T.A., 1914-16; Secretary, N.S.W. Branch P.I.E.U.A., 1916-27; General Advocate, P.I.E.U.A., 1924-31; M.L.C., 1925-43; Deputy President, N.S.W. Industrial Commission, 1931-32; Secretary and Advocate, P.I.E.U.A., 1933-52; Trustee, P.I.E.U.A., 1952-61; died March 1961.

Messrs. Stanbridge and Magrath were both members of the Labor Party.

led him at least once to an attempt to censure Labor parliamentarians.<sup>1</sup> Together Stanbridge and Magrath pursued Ratcliffe and Middleton with barrages of dissent motion, rescissions and votes of no confidence. Finally Magrath charged Ratcliffe with not 'putting up a fight' in the Association's interests as its representative on the Composing and Operating Board.<sup>2</sup> Ratcliffe escaped formal condemnation, but the Middleton-Ratcliffe dyarchy collapsed. Magrath became President in 1914, and was succeeded by Stanbridge on his retirement. Despite their previous criticism, their rise to power produced no increase in the Association's militancy.

In 1913 and 1914, the McGowen and Holman Labor governments had been embarrassed by the mounting strike action that had followed on increasing dissatisfaction with the workings of the reconstituted arbitration system.<sup>3</sup> Their handling of strikes had led to severe censure by the Labor Council,<sup>4</sup> and proposals to set up a distinct trade union party. In its 1914 electoral campaign the Labor Party partly redeemed itself with its trade union critics by promising to restrain the rising cost of living. Its platform promised a Fair Rents Bill, but with the outbreak of war, Holman announced that his Government would not proceed with 'contentious legislation' of this kind. Knowing that censure motions would be moved against him

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1

On the issue of the Financial Agreement referendum, see N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 6 May 1911.

2

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 5 April 1913.

3

In 1912, the McGowen Government had repealed the Industrial Disputes Act of 1908 and in its place passed the Industrial Arbitration Act. This became the parent Act of all subsequent N.S.W. legislation on arbitration and conciliation.

4

E.G., in the Gas Strike of 1913, in which the McGowen Government assisted in the recruitment of 'blacklegs'.

in the Sydney Labor Council, and that he would almost certainly have to face them again at the political Labor League Conference next April, Holman began to look for allies among those unions he was in a position to help.

The outbreak of war once again presented the unions with problems of unemployment. In the last quarter of 1914, the unemployment figure for all Australian industries rose to 11 per cent and reached almost 16 per cent in some. In Books, Paper and Printing, the figure for all States was 6.4 per cent and in Sydney it was possibly even higher.<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances, there was a conference between the Holman cabinet and the Executive of the N.S.W.T.A.

One of the Labor Council critics of Holman's refusal to introduce a Fair Rents Bill was T.J. Kohan, a delegate from the N.S.W.T.A.<sup>2</sup> Just before the Labor Council was due to hold its November meeting Kohan and his co-delegate received a letter from the N.S.W.T.A. Secretary, on behalf of the Executive, 'requesting them not to move or support any motion antagonistic to the Government, and to refrain from criticizing in any way.'<sup>3</sup> Kohan resented the letter, and read it to the Labor Council. At the subsequent Board Meeting called to decide what should be done, the Secretary opened the case against Kohan by outlining

work done by the Association in promoting of the welfare of members principally with the Government Printing Office, and referred to the possible hindrance of successful effort in retaining the employment of members during the depression consequent upon the war, and providing employment previous to Christmas for men now unemployed.

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1

Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Labour Bulletin, no.6, p.216.

2

Kohan v. Stanbridge and Others in the Supreme Court of N.S.W., no.2081 of 1915: Judge's Notes, p.9.

3

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 23 November 1914.



The Board dismissed Kohan from the office of delegate to the Labor Council.<sup>1</sup>

The N.S.W.T.A. maintained its loyalty to the Holman Government, and helped it escape censure at the Political Labor Leagues' Conference in April.<sup>2</sup> There is only one strike recorded in the Minutes for the three years 1914-16 - an unauthorized small stoppage among rotary machinists and publishers at the Sydney Morning Herald, in which the Organizer and President managed to 'induce' the strikers to return to work, and personally thanked those who did not participate.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the Association made great progress at the Government Printing Office, the last bastion of non-unionists. By December 1915, the Board could report 'the steady reduction in (their) number'. It noted too that a large number of craftsmen had been maintained in unbroken employment there, and paid tribute to the 'cordial support' of the State Labor Government and the 'assistance rendered by Ministers'.<sup>4</sup>

Magrath and Stanbridge had a lot to lose by striking, and their maintenance of the Ratcliffe-Middleton policy was the occasion of a rupture between the N.S.W.T.A. and the other printing unions that was long unhealed.<sup>5</sup> Late in 1913, the Letterpress Machinists' Union arranged that certain of their members at Simmons Limited should stop work in protest against the practice of having feeders

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 23 November 1914, Ultimately he was forced out of the Association

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 6 February 1915.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., 1 May 1915.

<sup>4</sup>

71st Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheet, 31 December 1915 in N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 4 March 1916.

<sup>5</sup>

Formally, reconciliation was not effected until 1966.

'make-ready'.<sup>1</sup> Simmons Ltd. replaced the machinists with non-union men, and all attempts to have the L.M.U. men reinstated failed. When the L.M.U. requested the N.S.W.T.A. to call out its compositors, the Association refused. On the motion of the L.M.U. delegates, the Printing Trades Federation Council resolved '...that it is regretted by this Council that the N.S.W.T.A. did not adopt a militant attitude in order to bring the trouble of the Letterpress Machinists to a successful issue'.<sup>2</sup> The N.S.W.T.A. resolved to withdraw its delegates. The Council refused to rescind the offending motion, despite the personal intervention of E.C. Magrath, who pointed out that the N.S.W.T.A. had a lot of agreements and awards that it did not wish to endanger.<sup>3</sup>

After the N.S.W.T.A. had withdrawn its delegates in January 1914, the Council went ahead with its plans for affiliating the Printing Trades Women and Girls' Union, and the Cardboard Boxmakers' Union, both recently formed,<sup>4</sup> and to revise its constitution so that it would have (in the view of the N.S.W.T.A.) more power over its affiliates than the A.T.U. This was too much for the Executive of the N.S.W.T.A.; it recommended disaffiliation, and in July a Special General Meeting endorsed its decision.<sup>5</sup>

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1

The L.M.U.'s view was that lads who did this kind of work eventually became letterpress machinists, although never indentured to the trade.

2

P.T.F.C. Minutes, 7 October 1913 to 10 January 1914.

3

Ibid., 19 May 1914.

4

The P.T.W. and G.U. was formed late in 1911 with the assistance of both the N.S.W.T.A. and the L.M.U. The Cardboard Boxmakers' Union was also a female union. It appointed a delegate, but after an initial meeting, is not mentioned again.

5

N.S.W.T.A. Minutes, 20 July 1914.

The Simmons incident and the events that followed demonstrated nicely that the fundamental interests of the N.S.W.T.A. and the M.T.S. were identical, despite the differences in their methods. The M.T.S. was most reluctant to take in members from the kindred trades, and held aloof from them when they were organized in their own unions; the N.S.W.T.A. welcomed them with open arms and participated energetically in the affairs of the Printing Trades Federation Council. But when the Association found that alliances with other printing trade unions threatened its Awards, it severed its formal connection. In practice, however, it could not avoid contact with the other printing unions, and the only possible gainer from bad relations between them was the Master Printers' Association.

It is highly likely that the Board of Management had given considerable thought to this problem even before the Simmons incident. Late in 1912, the Council of the A.T.U. announced that it had decided to submit the question of registering the Union with the Federal Arbitration Court to a ballot of members. The Board of Management of the N.S.W.T.A. decided to recommend Association members to vote 'Yes'.<sup>1</sup> They might well have done so partly because a Federal Award offered them a way out of perennial trouble with the unions of the Printing Trades Federation Council.

In the other States, the typographical societies catered for those categories of workers that in New South Wales belonged to the P.T.F.C. unions. The Federal Arbitration Court could therefore grant an Award which provided for them; as a party to the Award, the N.S.W.T.A. could then admit workers in these categories as members. If the Federal Award offered wages and conditions obviously

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 7 December 1912.

superior to those provided for by State Awards, then the N.S.W.T.A. would have a good chance of charming the members of the P.T.F.C. unions into its own ranks. The P.T.F.C. would collapse, and the N.S.W.T.A. would cease to be embarrassed by rival printing unions. This was not the kind of argument that officials of the N.S.W.T.A. were likely to put publicly, and the extent of its influence is a matter for speculation.

Absorption of the P.T.F.C. unions was however implicit in the N.S.W.T.A.'s plan for the One Big Union of Printers. This became the Association's major slogan in its propaganda for registration of the A.T.U. with the Federal Arbitration Court, and it was a powerful one. It countered I.W.W. propaganda for the One Big Union, it revived hopes for the Federation of Labour, and it recalled the recent successes in the Federal Arbitration Court of that very Big Union, the Australian Workers' Union. It also suggested that combination of Court procedure with industrial strength that has become a feature of Australian federal unionism.

Theoretically, all unions big and small, strong and weak, had an equal claim to the justice of the Arbitration Court. E.C. Magrath, the most powerful advocate of a Federal Printing Award in N.S.W., thought something else happened in practice:

they would get the best legislation by the Union showing industrial strength when it approached the Court. If the Union was weak and impotent, they would get an award that would be insufficient for their requirements...They wanted to impress the Court with the solidity of the Union when they made their claims.<sup>1</sup>

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1

A.T.J., no.528, October 1916, p.27. Magrath was reviewing the reasons for the foundation of the P.I.E.U.A. at its first Council meeting.

Put in more direct terms, Magrath's view was that the Court was influenced in its award-making by a union's capacity to strike. A Big Union was a necessary complement to arbitration court procedure.<sup>1</sup>

Other than providing an occasion for creating a Big Union of Printers, registration with the Federal Arbitration Court had little to offer the N.S.W.T.A., when the Board made its decision. The Sydney Newspaper Agreements provided rates of pay that vied with Melbourne's as the highest in Australia.<sup>2</sup> The Commercial Award paid about the same rates as those applying in the other capitals except Melbourne.<sup>3</sup> There was no provision in any Award that was particularly unsatisfactory. The Industrial Arbitration Act provided penalties against striking, but judges had administered them leniently, and the Association never complained. The Labor Government and the Association were on good terms. The N.S.W.T.A. had no compelling reason for attempting to escape from either the judiciary or the legislature in its own State, and its decision to register with the Federal Court seems to be best explained in terms of tactical industrial advantage.

This had become the N.S.W.T.A's main principle of action since its decision to register with the State Arbitration Court and affiliate with the Labor Party.

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In 1958, Mr Conciliation Commissioner Portus wrote: 'The strike weapon has been relegated further into the background by arbitration, but in the view of the trade unions, its use is still justified on occasions.' (The Development of Trade Union Law...., p.225).

2

It is not possible to compare piece rates for Linotype operators, since those in Sydney worked on a 'flat' rate, and those in Melbourne were entitled to 'phat'. 'Phat' is an idiosyncratic Melbourne spelling for 'fat'.

3

See Appendix B.

It had adopted compulsory arbitration as a means of recovering its privileges at a time when the trade union movement was still weak, and it had discovered once more that master printers were interested in making concessions in return for the kind of assistance it could give them. The N.S.W.T.A. had no need of its assistance in re-establishing privileges of the craft by the time the trade union movement had recovered strength. Indeed, it found involvement in its affairs likely to endanger valuable awards and agreements. This consideration outweighed sentiment for working class emancipation or pursuit of Utopias; the N.S.W.T.A. did what it could to dampen the ardor of the Labour Council, and cut its ties with the kindred printing trades. A Federal Award offered it a way of pursuing its business unhindered.

#### The South Australian Typographical Association

Like the N.S.W.T.A., the South Australian Typographical Association decided in 1913 for the registration of the A.T.U. with the Federal Arbitration Court. Its decision, however, had to do with escape from a government that it believed was anti-Labour in intention, and whose supporters would always remain powerful because the Labor Party could never hope to have a majority in the Legislative Council.

The S.A.T.A. had retained its membership through the nineties far better than the N.S.W.T.A., but depression and the continued installation of Linotype machines had demoralizing effects. At 31 December, 1902, the Association numbered about 240 members, only four of whom bothered to march in the Labour Day Procession. In June 1903 the balance sheet showed the lowest receipt of contributions

for some years,<sup>1</sup> and two years later, the Half-Yearly Report complained that there were several offices whose representation on the Board was purely nominal. A slow recovery began soon after, and membership reached 300 in 1909.

In these circumstances, the Board of Management continued to seek accommodation with the larger and more reputable master printers, and did what it could towards the establishment of a wages board or arbitration court. The Master Printers' Association and the S.A.T.A. co-operated in matters affecting tariffs and technical training, and some of the larger shops at least were closed to non-unionists.<sup>2</sup> The Master Printers' Association favoured establishing a Wages Board for the printing industry, and petitioned parliament for its establishment in 1907.<sup>3</sup>

The Board had been a long time in coming. The Legislative Council remained utterly opposed to any provision of wages boards until 1904, when it agreed to establish one for women and girls in the clothing industry. But it did not relent sufficiently to establish a general system of wages boards until 1907, when it passed a Consolidated Factory Act<sup>4</sup> which provided for Board on the Victorian pattern, and a Court to hear appeals against their determinations. From the point of view of the trade unions, the Act had two serious faults: the

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<sup>1</sup> S.A.T.A. Half-Yearly Report, 30 June 1903.

<sup>2</sup> The Register and Vardon's, S.A.T.A. Minutes, 1 August 1908.

<sup>3</sup> SA.T.A. Minutes, 31 August 1907.

<sup>4</sup> Edward VII, no.945.

Boards had no power to fix minimum wages above those 'paid by reputable employers to employees of average capacity', and no power to fix a proportion of apprentices to journeymen. Master Printers joined Society members in protesting against the second of these restrictions, but their combined efforts failed to influence the Legislative Council.<sup>1</sup>

As the Society feared, the 'reputable employer' clause worked to its disadvantage. Employers were reluctant to supply details of wages paid, and after only a few statistics had been collected, the Chairman announced that he was prepared to vote for a weekly wage of £2.18s. for the jobbing hand compositor. More wage returns arrived, which showed that the average wage paid was £2.15s.7d. Tied as it was by the 'reputable employer' clause, the Board awarded the hand compositor £2.16s. for 48 hours' work.

Society men saw very little extra in their pay envelopes, but they did gain by having the conditions they had arranged with 'fair' employers established with the force of law. By providing that all Linotype operators had to be duly qualified hand compositors, the Determination helped the Society restrict entry into this section of the trade. By specifying that there could be no more than one 'improver' employed for every 50 journeymen compositors in each shop, the Determination virtually eliminated the employment of 'improvers' in Adelaide.<sup>2</sup> In both of these important provisions, there were advantages for those proprietors who worked to Society rules, as well as for the Society itself.

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1

S.A.T.A. Minutes, 25 May 1909.

2

Since few if any shops would have employed fifty journeymen compositors.



But the theory of identity of interest between employer and employee was by no means wholeheartedly accepted by the Society's Executive. The S.A.T.A. kept a strong interest in the Trades and Labour Council though its secretary, F.S. Wallis,<sup>1</sup> who had succeeded J.A. Macpherson as the Council's secretary. It made donations to unions on strike, and some of these were substantial.<sup>2</sup> In 1905 it donated money to the State election campaign that resulted in the return of fifteen Labor men to Parliament, and the assumption of the Premiership by Tom Price as leader of a Labor-Liberal coalition.<sup>3</sup>

It seemed for a while that the events of 1910-1912 might have strengthened the Association's connections with the labour movement. As in N.S.W. and Victoria these were years of industrial expansion, prosperity and mild inflation. The Labor Party in parliament and the organized trade union movement grew appreciably in confidence. In June 1910, John Verran formed the first Labor Government in South Australia, and this remained in office until February 1912. Strikes, rare things in South Australia since 1890, became more common in Adelaide as skilled labour became scarcer. Some members of the S.A.T.A. who took matters into their own hands provided the Society

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1

F.S. Wallis: Born 1857, Macclesfield; educated Norwood Grammar School; Father of the Register Chapel, 1883; President, S.A.T.A., 1884-87; Secretary, 1887-1909; President, Trades and Labour Council, 1895; Secretary, 1897, and for many years after; Vice-President, United Labor Party, 1901; elected to represent the Central District on the Legislative Council, 1907; also a foundation member of the S.A. Branch of the Royal Geographical Society, and a life-long total abstainer.

2

E.g., the donation of £100 to the Broken Hill Miners, SA.T.A.Minutes, 23 January 1909.

3

Price's cabinet included at one time two S.A.T.A. men, A.A. Kirkpatrick and F.S. Wallis.

with its first strike since 1889.<sup>1</sup> Even agricultural workers went on strike at Renmark, and the South Australian labour movement achieved its own daily newspaper,<sup>2</sup> the Daily Herald, in March 1910.

The numbers of the S.A.T.A. increased considerably in this period. In anticipation of the Printers' Wages Board, Letterpress Printers and Stereotypers had formed themselves into a union in 1907 to elect their representatives and organize their claims. This was a considerable strain on such a small union; a few months after the Determination was gazetted, they approached the S.A.T.A. with a proposition for joining it. When the South Australian delegates raised the question at the Brisbane Conference of the A.T.U. in 1910, the Conference re-affirmed its previous decisions on organization of the allied trades, and in the next year the S.A.T.A. admitted a hundred letterpress machinists and stereotypers.<sup>3</sup>

This decision was important in more ways than one. As in Sydney, the machinists and stereotypers were admitted only on the condition that they would not transfer from one section of the industry to another without permission of the Board of Management. Further, since the Association was now responsible for representing two more crafts on the Wages Board, it needed a full-time Secretary. It appointed to this office its Honorary Secretary,

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1

'...the action of a few members in ceasing work without instructions...might have had serious results', but 'The tact of the Executive...prevented the trouble spreading'. S.A.T.A. Half-Yearly Report, 30 June 1912.

2

The Daily Herald grew out of the weekly, the Herald. It ceased publication in June 1924.

3

Report of the S.A.T.A. for the Half year ended 31 December 1911.

W.C. Melbourne, <sup>1</sup> who set about recruiting other printing tradesmen. By December 1912 there was a lithographic section within the Association, whose membership then totalled just on 600 - twice as many as three years previously.<sup>2</sup>

In these years, the Association continued to pay sustentation fees on all members to the Labor Party, voted sums for special campaigns, sent resolutions to Conferences and had the satisfaction of seeing some of them included in the Party's platform and followed as policy.<sup>3</sup> F.W. Birrell, President of the S.A.T.A., was President of the Trades and Labor Council. But in its association with the labour movement, the S.A.T.A. Executive seems to have been a good deal more enthusiastic than the membership.

The Daily Herald affair illustrated the limits of the Society's support. Seeking funds for more plant, the Daily Herald's manager wrote to the Association asking for its assistance. A specially-summoned meeting decided by 67 votes to 56 to invest £100 of the Association's funds in buying Daily Herald shares; the trustees refused to

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1

William Clifford Melbourne: Born 1864, Narracoorte; apprenticed, Narracoorte; hand and machine compositor, Advertiser, 1885-1911; President, S.A.T.A., 1902, 1904, 1908, 1909; Honorary Secretary, 1909-11; Secretary, 1911-24; President, P.I.E.U.A., 1918-19; died 1924. Mr Melbourne was also at one time or another President of the S.A. Branch A.L.P., President of the Workers' Educational Association, and Superintendent of the Glenelg Methodist Sunday School.

2

In S.A. in 1912, the average number of male factory employees in Books, Paper and Printing was 1,136.

3

On the establishment of State wood yards, and the fighting of 'the franchise battle to a finish, to the dissolution of both Houses if necessary...', S.A.T.A. Half-Yearly Report, 31 December 1911.

sign a cheque for the amount, claiming that the Association had no power to spend its money in this way. One of them, Mr W.S. Pearson, Vice-President of the Society and one of its representatives on the Wages Board, explained his stand to a later meeting. Mr Pearson was an employee of the Advertiser, and 'he was not prepared to take any action detrimental to the man who paid him his wages...In the office in which he worked, wages were paid in excess of the determination.'<sup>1</sup> The money was eventually paid over, but the incident could hardly have cheered those who based their hopes for the future on the solidarity of the labour movement.

Neither was the record of the Verran Government encouraging. Verran commanded an absolute majority in the House of Assembly, but in the Legislative Council and Labor Party was in a hopeless minority, and the system of provincial representation made it virtually certain that this would not change. There was thus a very definite limit on what the Government could achieve, and the Council quietly despatched those bills that sought to implement specifically Labor policies like preference to unionists. To make things worse, there was perpetual wrangling between Verran and the Trades and Labour Council.<sup>2</sup>

The behaviour of the Trades and Labour Council was particularly galling to Birrell. In November 1911, he told the Board of Management that he 'was disappointed and disgusted with Council', and that 'if he failed in his attempt to improve matters, (he) would be prepared to sever connection.'<sup>3</sup> The Association remained affiliated,

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1

S.A.T.A. Minutes, 19 November 1910.

2

See J.I. Craig, 'A History of the South Australian Labor Party....', p.101.

3

S.A.T.A. Minutes, 25 November 1911.

but successive Half-Yearly Reports record the dissatisfaction of the S.A.T.A. delegates with the way the Council did its business. Birrell and his co-delegates seem to have felt that the Council was not improving its organization sufficiently to parry the increasing strength of the Employers' Federation.<sup>1</sup>

This ineffectiveness of Labor-in-Parliament and the trade union movement acquired more importance as the Association grew increasingly dissatisfied with the Wages Board. Early in 1910, some employers appealed against some features of the Board's first Determination, which had by then been in force about a year. Judge Gordon ruled that the S.A.T.A. could not be heard in defence, and quashed the section which required that all operators should be qualified compositors.<sup>2</sup> Later in the year, the S.A.T.A. itself appealed against the original determination. It sought increases in wages rates to compensate for the rising cost of living, and in this had some success at a conference with the M.P.A. suggested by the Court.<sup>3</sup>

The rub came the next year, when the Association sought general increases because of rising costs of living, and increases in some categories on the specific grounds that these were below rates ruling in the other States. The Chairman of the Board made it plain that he would not

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1

S.A.T.A. Half-Yearly Reports, 31 December 1911 and 31 December 1913.

2

A.T.J., no.452, June 1910, p.25. He also permitted 'mixed systems' of time and piece on newspaper work.

3

S.A.T.A. Half-Yearly Report, 31 December 1910. Hand compositors had their rates increased from 1s.6d. to 1s.8d. an hour on morning dailies, and from £2.12s. to £2.16s. in jobbing offices. Letterpress machinists in jobbing offices also had their wages raised from £2.12s. to £2.16s.

recognize advances in other States as a reason for advances in South Australia, and that he was opposed to increases on the sole grounds that increased prices had robbed wages of some of their purchasing power. As a result of determined opposition by both the employers' representatives and the Chairman, the S.A.T.A. delegates decided to withdraw their log, considering that 'they would soon have to apply for a Federal Award'.<sup>1</sup> The Determination when made left the principal rates at their 1911 levels.<sup>2</sup>

By this time, there were other reasons for seeking to escape from South Australian industrial legislation. The Labor Party lost the 1912 elections, and the incoming Liberal Government passed an Industrial Arbitration Act in that year.<sup>3</sup> This act was one of the most repressive pieces of labour legislation passed before the 1920's. Section 39 provided a penalty of up to £500 for 'any person or association who or which (did) any act or thing in the nature of a strike...' and permitted a person to be imprisoned with hard labour for up to three months as well. Other sections prohibited picketing, allowed a person's wages to be garnisheed for payment of the fine, and permitted the Court it created to compel an Association to pay part of fines imposed on its individual members. There was no appeal from the Court's decisions.

At the A.T.U. Conference of 1913, F.W. Birrell spoke on the Industrial Arbitration Act at some length, and referred to the wharf labourers convicted under its

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1

S.A.T.A. Minutes, 13 April 1912.

2

Determination of the Printers, Bookbinders, Paper Rulers and Cutters' Board, 16 July 1912. The exception was the rate for Letterpress Machinists, which was increased from £3 to £3.10s.

3

1110 of 1912.

provisions. The men and their union escaped with light fines,<sup>1</sup> but apparently Birrell considered it unwise to rely on the clemency of judges. At the Board Meeting in December 1912 he had expounded on an alliance he believed to exist between Premier Peake, the Employers' Federation, and the Legislative Council.<sup>2</sup> So long as the S.A.T.A. abided by the decision of the State Wages Board, it seemed that its members had small hope of improving their wages and conditions.

When at Birrell's instigation the Board of Management took stock of its position, a Federal Award seemed the most attractive alternative. There was little prospect of succeeding by direct action. The Register disaster was well remembered, a large proportion of the membership was extremely loyal to its employers, the Association was unpractised in the art of striking, and there was no strongly-organized labour movement on whose support it could rely. Nor could it reasonably hope for benevolent legislation from a future Labor government to remove its disabilities under the law. The Federal Arbitration Act perhaps was not entirely desirable, but the Federal Labor Party had shown by its electoral successes in 1910 that it could achieve far more control over government in the Commonwealth than it could in South Australia. The Labor victory in the Commonwealth elections of 1913 further strengthened the case of those who argued that way, and so did a sudden halt in the expansion of the South Australian printing industry in that year.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Birrell was apparently thinking of *Vasey v. Poulson*, and *Jenkinson v. Buckley* and others. In the former, the V.W.F. was fined £5; in the latter, the four defendants were fined £3 with costs of £1.7s.9d. each. See S.A. Industrial Court: Record Book No.1.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.T.A. Minutes, 21 December 1912.

<sup>3</sup> Average number of hands employed on Books, Paper and Printing in South Australia

1910	:	1792	1912	:	1924
1911	:	1839	1923	:	1932

But by this time the Board had already made its decision, and when the A.T.U. prepared to conduct a ballot on its registration with the Federal Arbitration Court, the Board advised its members to vote 'yes'.<sup>1</sup> Two months later there had been so few ballot papers returned that the Board had to request its collectors in the various offices 'to try and return the balance of the papers'.<sup>2</sup> This lack of interest suggests that members felt no real oppression. Wages in some categories were below rates paid in other States of Australia, but every State had some members in this position. Judged by their peers, the majority of S.A.T.A. members were receiving reasonable wages when they sent their delegates to the Conference of 1913 to seek registration of the A.T.U. with the Federal Arbitration Court.<sup>3</sup> The decision was essentially that of a Board of Management more politically aware than the members.

#### The Western Australian Typographical Industrial Union

In Western Australia there was also no great sense of oppression to drive the W.A.T.I.U. out of the State industrial system into the Federal Arbitration Court. In their industrial relations, the W.A.T.I.U. had followed the New South Wales pattern closely, and with particular success, after its members had weathered the first hard years.

Even before the end of the nineteenth century the industrial tempo of the Kalgoorlie-Coolgardie goldfields had begun to slacken. Early in 1899 the Coolgardie

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1

S.A.T.A. Minutes, 21 December 1912.

2

Ibid., 25 January 1913.

3

Only newspaper hand compositors could have expected any appreciable wage increase from a Federal Award. For their relative position at the end of 1913, see Appendix B.



correspondent of the A.T.J. noted that many compositors had to 'turn their attention to dry-blowing and "sinking duffers" in the hope of striking a patch' since 'Liquidation is a common thing with Goldfields newspapers now'.<sup>1</sup> Their chance of re-employment as compositors on the Goldfields diminished as proprietors installed Linotypes and Monolines.<sup>2</sup> By April 1903, there were only seven members left in the Coolgardie Typographical Society, and with the depleted numbers of the Kalgoorlie and Menzies Societies, they together merged to form the Goldfields Typographical Society later in the year.

The men displaced drifted to Perth, where they competed for work with those who had come from further east in their attempt to elude depression and mechanization. But the Perth printing industry was not nearly large enough to absorb them all. By the turn of the century, machines were doing most of the straight setting on the dailies, and in the next few years the installation of Linotype machines continued in the jobbing shops and at the Government Printing Office.<sup>3</sup> In 1901, those employed in Books, Paper and Printing numbered 863, and there was an irregular expansion of the industry until 1906, when it employed 1012 people, all but a few score of them in Perth.<sup>4</sup> This growth was not sufficient to provide regular employment for all,<sup>5</sup> and worse was to come. For three successive years the number employed in the industry declined, and it was not until 1911 that it again employed as many

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<sup>1</sup>  
A.T.J., vol.XXIX, no.344, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>  
See A.T.J., Vol.XXX, no.346, and no.370, August 1903, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>  
A.T.J., May 1907, p.1.

<sup>4</sup>  
Statistical Register of W.A. for 1910.

<sup>5</sup>  
In June 1906 the Perth correspondent of the A.T.J., remarked: 'Things here are worse than I have ever seen them....'

people as in 1906.<sup>1</sup> Union membership and morale flagged.<sup>2</sup>

In these circumstances, the Union was very happy to fall back on the authority of the Arbitration Court. When the Court was set up in 1902,<sup>3</sup> the Typographical Society at Perth hastened to register, anxious to avail itself of the Court's power to make what was in effect a common rule for the industry. On registering, the Society was required to provide in its rules that no money could be voted for striking, and was subject to a penalty of £500 if it took part in a strike. As matters stood in 1902, and for many years afterwards, surrender of the right to strike was of no practical consequence.

The Western Australian Typographical Industrial Union<sup>4</sup> approached the Court almost immediately for judgement in a newspaper wages dispute. The Award fixed a maximum of 42 hours' night work for the hand compositor, but deprived the Linotype operators of their 'fat', and substituted a 'flat' rate of 4d. a thousand. The result was fairly acceptable to the W.A.T.I.U. and it did not approach the Court until six years later. In 1908, it secured another newspaper award, which it deemed 'eminently satisfactory' and sought its first award in the jobbing industry. The Union had to wait almost another year before

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1

Statistical Register of W.A. for 1911. The industry in this year employed 1142 persons.

2

Membership in December 1902 was 160; in December 1908:150. A large number of members were heavily in arrears, and offices did not bother to elect representatives to the Board of Management. See W.A.T.I.U. Half-Yearly Report, 31 December 1908, A.T.J., no.389, March 1905, p.66 and no.399, January 1906, p.4.

3

1 & 2 Edward VII, no.21. The Act drew heavily on New Zealand precedent.

4

On registration, the W.A. Typographical Union changed its name (as required) to the W.A. Typographical Industrial Union (W.A.T.I.U.)

legal process was complete, but its patience was rewarded. The Court awarded hand compositors £3.5s. for a week of 48 daylight hours, and ten shillings more if the work were done at night. Even though this was an increase on average rates, the W.A.T.I.U. was still more happy about some other features of the Award - and so were some employers.

In making the Printing Industry Award of November 1909 the Court took advantage of a recent amendment of the Industrial Arbitration Act which gave it wider powers over apprenticeships.<sup>1</sup> It decided that the term of the apprenticeship in the commercial printing industry should be five years; that there should be no more than one apprentice to every four journeymen, or part thereof; that the boy's indentures were to be registered with the Court; that each boy should be examined annually by a representative of the employers and a representative of the employees; and that if the Examining Committee reported to the Court that the apprentice was being denied reasonable facilities for learning, the employer was prima facie guilty of a breach of the Award.

The Court had played no part in the actual determination of the Award's conditions. These had been agreed upon by some employers and the representatives of the W.A.T.I.U.<sup>2</sup> with obvious advantages to both sides. The Union could expect the Award to banish 'the "cheap and nasty" workmen known as improvers - a product of the lax system of apprentices hitherto in existence',<sup>3</sup> and the larger employers who worked according to Union rules would

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<sup>1</sup>  
No.47 of 1909.

<sup>2</sup>  
W.A.T.I.U. Half-Yearly Report, 31 December 1908.

<sup>3</sup>  
A.T.J., no.449, March 1910, p.13.

not suffer from the competition of 'sweated' labour. Their position was further strengthened by two minor variations obtained by the Union shortly after the Court delivered the Award: that each employer must keep records of time worked and work done by each employee, and that these records must be available for the inspection of any representative of the unions of employers or employees, or of the Court. It then

only remained for members to co-operate with the Executive in compelling the hitherto unfair employer to come up and compete with the reputable and good employer.

This kind of assistance from the Union assisted the employers greatly in establishing their Master Printers' Association and Typothetae in Perth. The Perth M.P.A. was formed some time early in 1910, and two years later Wimble's Reminder noted that the

W.A. Typothetae claimed the allegiance of 25 firms, and by substituting a method of cost accounting guaranteed a minimum net profit of 25 per cent by eliminating competition as to price.<sup>2</sup>

The W.A.T.I.U. had been 'a big help' in making these arrangements - even to the extent of using its influence to compel a firm to re-join the M.P.A.<sup>3</sup> Its reward had been some informal arrangements about preference to its members and another consent award from the Court, which increased the commercial hand compositor's wages by five shillings a week. The Board recorded

their appreciation of the manner in which the Employers met the Union and recognized the justice of their claims, thus promoting that spirit of harmony which should prevail between employer and employees.<sup>4</sup>

1

Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Wimble's Reminder, February 1912.

3

E.S. Wigg and Sons. See W.A.T.I.U. Minutes, 9 December and 10 February 1912.

4

W.A.T.I.U. Half-Yearly Report 31st June 1911.

This relationship between the W.A.T.I.U. and the Master Printers' Association had confirmed itself in the absence of any close ties between the Union and the labour movement. The interest in it that the Union's Executives had shown in the nineties continued into the early 1900s when the Secretary, Jim Keaughran<sup>1</sup> managed the Democrat, a little weekly that was the joint project of Senator Pearce and two Labor Ms.L.A.<sup>2</sup> The President of the Union worked on the same paper, but Secretary and President together could not inspire their members with their own enthusiasm for the cause of Labor-in-Parliament. In June 1903 a Special General Meeting decided for membership of the new Trades and Labour Council, but against affiliation with the Political Labor League, 'a subject productive at all times of much discussion and ...dissent too'.<sup>3</sup> A year later, a ballot of members quashed a decision of the Annual General Meeting to reverse the decision. Keaughran went to Kalgoorlie to manage the Worker, trade went from bad to worse, and interest in the labour movement faltered.

Some kind of revival began even at that time when the Union with one hand was giving the M.P.A. its most vigorous assistance. The results of the 1911 elections exceeded even the Labor Party's hopes, and the W.A.T.I.U. congratulated John Scaddan in his accession to the Premiership. But their re-awakening labour interest was industrial rather than parliamentary. In 1910 there had been a noticeable revival in the printing industry and

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1

James Keaughran: Foundation member of the first Perth Typographical Society, 1888; President, Perth Typographical Society, 1895; Secretary, P.T.S. and W.A.T.I.U., 1898-1904; conducted first printing case in W.A. Arbitration Court, 1902; President, W.A.T.I.U., 1913; Councillor, P.I.E.U.A., 1916, 1922-25.

2

Nelson and Bath.

3

A.T.J., no.368, June 1903, p.3.

the numbers it employed increased fairly steadily for the next three years.<sup>1</sup> From November 1911, the Union admitted readers and their assistants, and its membership increased by almost a third between June 1910 and June 1913.<sup>2</sup> It co-operated with the unions of letterpress machinists and bookbinders in the negotiation of wage agreements at the Government Printing Office,<sup>3</sup> began negotiation with a Newspaper Employees' Union that resulted in the admission of 46 stereotypers, rotary machinists and publishers in April, 1914,<sup>4</sup> and made its first determined attempt at country organization. Early in 1912, Andrew Fisher laid the foundation stone of the Perth Trades Hall, and the W.A.T.I.U. moved in even before it was opened.<sup>5</sup> When the Worker moved to Perth (and with it Jim Keaughran), people began to talk about a Labor daily. With returning confidence, some members of the W.A.T.I.U. got as far as threatening a strike.

Significantly enough, this was not in the jobbing trade, but in the newspaper industry. In 1912, Thomas Coy, sub-printer at the West Australian, sued three members of the Union for conspiring to remove him from his position by threatening to call the Chapel out on strike unless he was dismissed.<sup>6</sup> The plaintiff won a verdict for £500 and costs; the defendants found next pay day that the whole of their wages had been garnisheed. They handed in their

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<sup>1</sup> Books, Paper, Printing: numbers employed in W.A. 1910, 1033; 1911, 1142; 1912, 1174; 1913, 1229.  
Source: W.A. Statistical Register

<sup>2</sup> Membership at 30 June, 1910, 165; at 30 June, 1913, 229.

<sup>3</sup> A.T.J., no.477, July 1912, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> W.A.T.I.U. Minutes, 4 April 1914.

<sup>5</sup> A.T.J., no.475, May 1912, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Messrs Baillie, Spruhan and Hinds. Baillie was Father of the Chapel, and Spruhan was Clerk.

notices, and the composing room staff voted to follow them at the end of the week. Masters and men managed to reach a settlement before the staff walked out.<sup>1</sup>

The Coy case was the occasion of establishing firm relations between the W.A.T.I.U. and the A.T.U. Brother typographical societies throughout the Commonwealth voted money and support for the Western Australian Union, and the A.T.U. Council offered to defray the entire costs of the case.<sup>2</sup> The Board of the W.A.T.I.U. gratefully accepted, and in their Half-Yearly Report wrote:

That the federation of the Typographical Unions throughout the Commonwealth is something more than a federation in name was attested by the magnificent manner in which the A.T.U. came to the aid of members of this Union....<sup>3</sup>

Next month, members of the W.A.T.I.U. voted by 61 votes to 11 for registration of the A.T.U. with the Federal Arbitration Court, and in February invited the A.T.U. to hold its 1913 Conference in Perth.

This was a decision inspired in no way by a desire to get out of one system of wage-fixing into another. The wage rates of the majority of members compared very well with those ruling in other States. The Perth commercial hand compositor was a few shillings a week better off than his Sydney equivalent, and the Perth newspaper linotype on piece rate was 1¼d. a thousand over the Sydney rate.<sup>4</sup> Nor were there any immediate political considerations.

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<sup>1</sup>  
A.T.J., no.478, August 1912, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>  
£195.16s.7d.

<sup>3</sup>  
W.A.T.I.U. Half-Yearly Report, 31 December 1912.

<sup>4</sup>  
For a more detailed comparison, see Appendix B

After winning the 1911 elections Labor remained in power until 1916. The Legislative Council was not particularly obstructive,<sup>1</sup> Unions suffered no great disabilities under the law, and the W.A.T.I.U.'s relations with the M.P.A. were excellent. The W.A.T.I.U.'s vote in favour of Federal registration was principally a product of its members' sentimental attachment to the ideal of Australian unionism. Only about a third of Western Australian printers had worked in that State alone.<sup>2</sup> The Coy case provided a timely example of the benefits a big union could provide, and the West Australian loneliness did the rest.

### The Queensland Typographical Association

Members of the Queensland Typographical Association on the other hand had some cogent reasons for seeking a Federal Award. The Association preferred to follow the Melbourne rather than the Sydney pattern, but circumstances forced the latter on it, and then swept it into the Brisbane General Strike of 1912. The final result was disastrous, although the Q.T.A. had begun the new century in excellent style.

Despite the actual decrease in the number of hand compositors employed between 1901 and 1904, the Q.T.A. managed to expand its membership to the point where it was able to announce in 1905 that there were 'very few printers in the city of Brisbane outside the Union.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See J.R. Robertson: 'The Foundations of State Socialism in Western Australia: 1911-16' in Historical Studies, vol.X, no.39.

<sup>2</sup>States worked in by the first 200 applicants for membership of the W.A. branch P.I.E.U.A. 1916.

Western Australia only	67	New Zealand and W.A.	4
Victoria and W.A.	43	England or Scotland	
N.S.W. and W.A.	19	and W.A.	24
South Australia and W.A.	9	In more than one of	
Queensland and W.A.	2	the above and W.A.	32

<sup>3</sup>A.T.J., no.387, January 1905, p.26. No membership figures are available for these years.



The outstanding characteristic of the Q.T.A.'s achievement was that it managed this without the help of the Master Printers' Association, and probably in spite of it. The M.P.A. was better organized in Queensland than elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> had little need of the kind of assistance that the Q.T.A. could give, and after the events of the nineties, no desire to come to terms. The Q.T.A. was able to get a hearing from some firms,<sup>2</sup> but it got nowhere with others,<sup>3</sup> and never managed to achieve anything by conference with the M.P.A. as a body.<sup>4</sup>

As a result, the Association turned more determinedly and earlier than its brother societies in Adelaide and Perth to organization within the labour movement. After the defeats of the nineties, the old A.L.F. was moribund, and it was the Executive of the Q.T.A. that set about rebuilding the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council. Two years later, the Council was a going concern, and the Association's Secretary, W.P. Colborne, was its President.<sup>5</sup> The council carried on the campaign initiated by the Q.T.A. for an Arbitration Act, but deputation after deputation failed.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, most members were reluctant to take the step that seemed most necessary to some others:

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<sup>1</sup> Wimble's Reminder, September 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 14 June and 13 December 1902.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. with William Brooks, and the metropolitan daily, and Telegraph.

<sup>4</sup> Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 17 January 1902, 11 June and 13 August 1904.

<sup>5</sup> Q.T.A. Minutes of General Meetings, 27 April 1901 and 25 April 1903, and the Brisbane Courier, 28 August 1903.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 26 October 1901 and Minutes of Board Meetings, 19 September 1904.

to affiliate with the Labor Party and commit the Association to the election of a Labor Government. Four times in three years the supporters of Labor-in-Parliament sponsored motions for the aid of the Party; four times they were defeated. Finally in January 1904 the Annual General Meetings altered the Rules to provide that no money could be voted for political purposes without a ballot of members being taken.<sup>1</sup> Members were not going to jeopardise returning confidence by introducing political controversy.

For although the most conspicuous activities of the Association seem to have been the work of a few dedicated men,<sup>2</sup> the membership at large was becoming more sure of itself. In 1904 and 1905, members approved of two short term unemployment schemes,<sup>3</sup> and in December 1904 voted decisively for re-affiliation with the A.T.U.,<sup>4</sup> a proposition shelved in 1902 for lack of funds. The Association even managed to score some minor successes in bargaining. In 1905, it extracted from the Labor-Liberal Coalition Government a promise of preferential employment for members at the Government Printing Office, and as early as October 1903 managed to win a dispute over payment for piece work at the Daily Mail.<sup>5</sup> But the Daily Mail's turn was to come.

In July 1905, Rennie Heath Standley, an apprentice member near the end of his time, sought and obtained from

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1

Ibid., 30 January 1904.

2

The reader becomes suspicious of the number of times vacant offices are exactly filled by nomination.

3

Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 9 April and 12 August 1905.

4

By 100 votes to 19. Minutes of Q.T.A. Board Meetings, 10 December 1904.

5

Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 14 November 1903.

the Board of Management its approval to the extension of his apprenticeship provided he stayed on at the office where he was then employed. Standley however entered into agreement with the Printer of the Daily Mail to work as a galley-puller at wages well below the rate the Association recognized as a journeyman's minimum. The Printer in return guaranteed to teach him how to work a Linotype machine.

This arrangement broke three rules of the Association, which in common with the rules of all typographical societies in the Commonwealth provided that apprentices must remain in the office where they were bound, that only journeymen should be employed on a daily paper, and that only duly-qualified compositors should learn to work a Linotype machine. Despite attempts by officers of the Association to dissuade him, Standley insisted on beginning work at the Daily Mail on the terms arranged. The Chapel (all members of the Q.T.A.) notified the Printer that if Standley were taken on, they would not work with him, and he was not employed. Standley sued the Q.T.A. through its officers, and members of the Chapel, for seeking to injure him in his trade. He sought from the Association and each of the others £500 damages.

The case came on in March 1906 before Mr Justice Real and a special jury of five. His Honour made it clear that he had little sympathy for the defendants. He quarrelled violently with the Q.T.A.'s Secretary and its Counsel, and in obiter dicta disparaged their characters, and severely criticized trade unionists and their works. When the hearing ended, His Honour put sixteen questions for the jury to answer, and left little doubt as to his own opinions on each. The jury found for the plaintiff, awarded him £106 damages in each instance, and costs. Only the generosity of a bank manager in allowing the Association to overdraw its account prevented Standley's solititors

from putting bailiffs into the houses of those defendants employed at the Daily Mail. The judgment followed that given in Heggie v. Brisbane Shipwright's Provident Union and meant in effect that any Queensland trade union attempting to carry out rules which restricted employment stood in danger of bankruptcy if sued by a disaffected member.<sup>1</sup>

Despite almost £200 donated by other unions, and a similar amount from the A.T.U., the judgment nearly broke the Q.T.A. It had to suspend payment from its Mortality Fund,<sup>2</sup> and impose a punishing levy on its members. Many resignations followed, and morale suffered badly.<sup>3</sup> In April 1907, the Father of the Telegraph Chapel was victimized for attempting to recruit members for the Association, and the Q.T.A. had to let it pass.<sup>4</sup> A year later, a strike at the Courier failed ignobly when the hand compositors refused to come out in support of the Linotype operators. The Courier was closed and became a non-union office.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

This account of Standley v. Queensland Typographical Association is based on the reports in the Brisbane Courier, 9-12 March 1906, and in the A.T.J., April and August 1906. Mr Justice Real had presided in Heggie v. Brisbane Shipwrights' Provident Union the previous year. On this case see Portus: The Development of Australian Trade Union Law, pp.234-5. Some of the particular features of Standley's case suggest that he was acting as an agent of one or more employers.

<sup>2</sup>

Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 8 September 1906.

<sup>3</sup>

Three general meetings in succession failed for want of a quorum about the end of 1906. Minutes of Q.T.A. Board Meetings, 9 February 1907.

<sup>4</sup>

Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 13 April 1907.

<sup>5</sup>

Ibid., 25 July 1908, and A.T.J., no.429, July 1908.

Even before the Courier disaster, the Association had decided that the Wages Boards provided for by the Factories Act Amendment Act of 1907 with all their faults offered the best hope. The General Meeting of April 1908 empowered the Board to make application for appointment of a Printers' Wages Board at the first opportunity. The Act provided for the establishment of Boards in the metropolitan areas, and in several divisions of the State, When ultimately the Q.T.A. decided to apply for Boards in each major division, the burden of the necessary organization fell on W.P. Colborne, appointed first permanent Secretary in August 1908.

His task was an unenviable one. The Queensland printing industry was the most scattered in the Commonwealth; towns along the 1400 miles of coastline north of Brisbane published no fewer than nine daily papers, and there were others inland.<sup>1</sup> Their presence helped explain why the Q.T.A. alone of the capital city typographical societies had not been able to make closed shops of the metropolitan dailies. All the reasons that had prompted attempts at country organization in the eighties still obtained, but now there was the fear that practices the Association had always complained of might be given force of law. Equally bad, Boards controlled by employers in these areas could give decisions that would pull down wage rates in Brisbane.

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1

At Warwick and Ipswich. See The Union List of Newspapers Published in Australia. In N.S.W. in 1908 there were only nine daily papers published outside Sydney. Of the 1,981 people employed in the Queensland printing industry in 1905 (the last year for which a breakdown of this kind is available) a fifth worked outside the Southern Division, which in itself took in towns along the coast to Bundaberg. About a quarter therefore worked outside of Brisbane, a city they all passed through if they were going interstate.

The Q.T.A. had to ensure that employees' representatives on the Boards represented its point of view adequately. To get these men elected and brief them properly it would have to organize perhaps a dozen branches - that is, achieve something twice as difficult as it had failed in twenty years earlier.

This was not all. Ordinary prudence as well as union principles required that the allied trades be organized as well. Yet not one of the other printing crafts in Queensland had any union of its own, so that it fell to the Q.T.A., a union to this date of compositors and machinists only, to organize the other members of the printing trades as well. It first widened its ranks in September 1908, when the Board decided to admit bookbinders, paper rulers and lithographers, and gradually took in other sections, so that by January 1913 membership of the Q.T.A. was open to any person employed in the printing trade.<sup>1</sup> The branches that it managed to establish along the coast, on the Downs, and one the Tableland followed the same policy.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of the Q.T.A.'s resources and the time available the task was gigantic. It was also exhausting and unrewarding. Branches collapsed, or became ineffective.<sup>3</sup> Many of the men in the other printing crafts refused to join, and some who joined later resigned.<sup>4</sup> Peaceful negotiation

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1

Q.T.A. Minutes of General Meeting, 25 January 1913.

2

The bulk of organizing work fell on W.P. Colborne, but he was assisted occasionally by Messrs W. McCosker and P.A. McLachlan, both at one time Presidents of the Association. For the principal stages in the formation of the country branches see Minutes of Q.T.A. General meetings, 22 August 1908, 31 July 1909 and 29 January 1910; and Board Meetings, 12 September 1908, 15 March 1909, 12 November 1909, 13 December 1909, 15 January 1910, 11 June 1910.

3

Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 11 March 1911 and Half-Yearly Report, 31 December 1911.

4

A.T.J., no.476, June 1912, p.2.

on the Brisbane Board at least proved impossible, and some of the employers' representatives did their best to hamper proceedings.<sup>1</sup> The Wages Board system had the effect of so far consolidating the M.P.A. that by the end of 1911 only one Brisbane firm stood outside it.<sup>2</sup> To cap it all, the Determinations were distinctly disappointing. At the end of four years of negotiation, the jobbing compositor's wage in Brisbane was £2.16s., the lowest metropolitan rate in Australia.<sup>3</sup> Country wages had shown appreciable increases only in the Northern Division, where members at Cairns had organized a strike in support of higher wages in 1911.<sup>4</sup> The Association's experience with Wages Boards had two principal political effects: it helped members resolve on affiliation with the Labor Party, and later, it pushed them increasingly towards strike action.

The Q.T.A. first affirmed its allegiance to the Labor Party twelve months after deciding to seek a Wages Board. At the General Meeting of April 1909 members carried a motion which pledged the Association's loyalty to the principles of the Labor platform, and by that formal resolution won the right to vote in the selection of candidates. The support for the Party grew slowly

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1

Ibid., nos.465-468, July to October 1911, pp.2, 2, 3 and 2; and the Courier, 28 July, 1, 27, 28 September 1911.

2

Ibid., no.447, January 1910; Wimble's Reminder, November 1911. By this time the Queensland Typothetae had registered its rules (including those for fining erring members) under the Trades Union Act.

3

In money terms. In 'real' terms, the Brisbane hand compositor was not so badly off as he thought. See Appendix B.

4

A.T.J., no.470, December 1911, p.2. By November 1911 the Northern Board had still accomplished nothing. On 25 November the Cairns compositors succeeded in raising their minimum wage from £2.10s. to £3 by threatening to strike.

however, and it was not until July 1910 that the Q.T.A. could bring itself to the point of voting any money that would help prosecute its political views in Parliament.<sup>1</sup> Soon after, it began to contemplate even swifter solutions to its problems.

From about 1907, Queensland's economy began to grow at a faster rate, and as it did, trade union organization revived spectacularly. In the North, the Amalgamated Workers Association won substantial wage increases for its members by a series of strikes on railways and in the canefields. The Amalgamated Meat Industry Employees' Union won round after round until its industry was a union one and its members far better paid. Members of the Australian Workers' Union benefited greatly from Awards of the Federal Arbitration Court made by Mr Justice Higgins. The Australian Labor Federation revived in the kinder climate. In Brisbane, a score of smaller unions were established between 1909 and 1911, and the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council dissolved itself to make way for the Brisbane District Council of the A.L.F.<sup>2</sup>

As the trade union movement strengthened, and as the bargaining position in the printing industry improved,<sup>3</sup> so the Q.T.A. became more concerned with alternatives to the wages Board system. In December 1910 it decided by ballot to affiliate with the A.L.F. In the following May members called a special meeting by requisition to resolve

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1

Q.T.A. Minutes of General Meetings, 30 July 1910.

2

This account is based on Chapter VI of R. McCaig: Labour Organization and Objectives in Queensland 1890-1920. Dissertation. University of Queensland 1950.

3

Employment in Books, Paper and Printing, 1907-13, Queensland:

1907, 2,243; 1909, 2,479; 1911, 2,775; 1913, 1,982;  
1908, 2,311; 1910, 2,400; 1912, 2,918.



a motion which demanded a minimum of three pounds for forty-four hours on the threat of strike.<sup>1</sup> The motion was withdrawn, but turned up again a few weeks later, when it was defeated by an amendment seeking a conference with the Master Printers - which they refused.<sup>2</sup> In between, the Association had dealt with a circular on the Gas Workers' dispute. It replied that

while of the opinion that a General Strike is the only means of settling the question of Unionism versus Capitalism under the circumstances mentioned in the Circular, we consider that a large amount of propaganda and organizing work is necessary to bring such a movement to a successful issue.<sup>3</sup>

Within a few months, the Association had the chance of testing its opinion when the Brisbane General Strike stopped metropolitan industry for a fortnight.

From 1904, the Brisbane Tramway Company had succeeded in frustrating all attempts to form a union among its employees. Then in 1911, a Federal Tramways Union began to establish a branch in Brisbane, and attempted to force recognition from the Company by having its members wear their union membership badge while at work. When the Company dismissed these men, the A.L.F. held a strike conference which resolved that unless the Company recognized the Union, there would be a general strike. The Company refused. On 30 January 1912 upwards of 20,000 members of 43 unions left their jobs, and for a few days the strike extended to Ipswich and north coastal towns. The Denham Government protected strike-breakers, and its police and troops fought with demonstrators.

<sup>1</sup>

Q.T.A. Minutes of General Meeting, 20 May 1911.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 29 July 1911.

<sup>3</sup>

Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 29 May 1911.

Strikers drifted back to work, the Company got its trams running again, and the Strike Committee ordered a return to work on 26 February.<sup>1</sup>

At its Annual General Meeting, members of the Q.T.A. had endorsed the strike, and passed a motion requiring the nationalization of the tramways.<sup>2</sup> The Association followed the directive of the Strike Committee to cease work on the 30 January, and its members in country branches went out with their fellow unionists. With the approval of the Strike Committee the Executive of the Q.T.A. ordered its members to return to work on 15 February. By this time, the Association had almost done enough to break itself.

The Half-Yearly Report for 30 June 1912 implies impeccable behaviour by members during the Strike, but the Minutes tell another story. The return to work was followed by a purge in which no fewer than 75 members were struck off the books, fined, or required to make an explanation before the Board.<sup>3</sup> A crop of resignations followed. The Association's funds had melted away in strike pay, and only a donation of £500 from the A.T.U. kept it solvent. The sections of bookbinders and lithographers seceded.<sup>4</sup> The Cairns branch collapsed.<sup>5</sup>

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1

This summary is based on I.A.H. Turner: 'Industrial Labour and Politics, 1900-1921' and A. Morrison: 'The Brisbane General Strike of 1912' in Historical Studies, vol.IV, no.14, May 1950.

2

Q.T.A. Minutes of General Meetings, 27 January 1912.

3

Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 2 March 1912.

4

Ibid., 13 July 1912.

5

Ibid., 12 October 1912.

The Association closed the Telegraph and the Courier, and some jobbing offices. Eighteen months later there were only two 'strictly union' offices left in Brisbane.<sup>1</sup> By that time, there were about 300 members, compared with over 500 just before the strike.

They faced the determined opposition of both the M.P.A. and the State Government. Queensland Master Printers considered that they narrowly escaped Red revolution,<sup>2</sup> and they were not alone in that opinion. Late in 1912 the Denham Government hurried through Parliament an Industrial Peace Act which imposed heavy penalties on those who took part in strikes.<sup>3</sup> Its provisions were not as severe as those of the Industrial Arbitration Act passed by the South Australian Parliament in the same year, and little different from those in force in New South Wales. But in Brisbane trade unionists could not expect the leniency shown by the Bench in Sydney. The direct representation of the labour movement in parliament now seemed more important than ever before, and those unions that could sought to escape from the State system into the Federal Arbitration Court. The Q.T.A. was one of these.

#### The A.T.U. and Federal Registration

Far more than any other Typographical Society, the Q.T.A. had benefited from the existence of the Australasian Typographical Union, and it showed appreciation of its further need by repeatedly requesting the enlargement of the Union's activities and powers. In February 1908

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 9 August 1913.

<sup>2</sup> Wimble's Reminder, May 1912.

<sup>3</sup> 3 George V, no.19.

as it began the huge task of preparing for the introduction of wages boards, it requested the A.T.U. to send an organizer to Queensland;<sup>1</sup> in 1910, after two years of disappointment, its delegates moved at the Brisbane Conference of the A.T.U. for registration of the Union under the Federal Arbitration Act.<sup>2</sup>

The other delegates were not enthusiastic, and the motion was amended to provide for a revision of the A.T.U. rules that would satisfy the requirements of Federal registration. The amendment also referred the question of registering with the Federal Court to the next Conference, but provided for earlier consultation if this seemed advisable.<sup>3</sup> After the Brisbane General Strike, the Q.T.A. sought to invoke this clause for immediate Federal registration of the A.T.U.<sup>4</sup> The Council of the A.T.U. decided to submit the question to a ballot of members, together with one on the admission of the Federated Bookbinders as a Society.<sup>5</sup> Before the ballot was taken, the Queensland Parliament passed the Industrial Peace Act, and the Q.T.A. drew up a manifesto appealing to members of all other Societies to vote 'Yes'.<sup>6</sup> After the ballot had been carried, the Q.T.A. moved for its adoption

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<sup>1</sup> Q.T.A. Minutes of General Meetings, 8 February 1908.

<sup>2</sup> A.T.U., no.452, June 1910, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 13 July 1912.

<sup>5</sup> There were three minor questions put on the ballot paper as well.

<sup>6</sup> Q.T.A. Minutes of Board Meetings, 9 November 1912.

by the Federal Conference at Perth in 1913.<sup>1</sup> So did the S.A.T.A., and both Associations had the support of the W.A.T.I.U., and the N.S.W.T.A. and all the smaller societies except one.<sup>2</sup> The Melbourne Typographical Society opposed, and so did the Ballarat Society.

The M.T.S. delegates faced the Conference with a motion of disloyalty tabled against them. Their Society had for all practical purposes refused to submit to their members the A.T.U. ballot paper which put the question on Federal registration.<sup>3</sup> Since the ballot was not carried by a majority of members of the A.T.U., they claimed that under Rule XVIII its result was not binding.<sup>4</sup> The movers withdrew their motion of censure, but the delegates of the M.T.S. continued to oppose the registration of the A.T.U. in the Federal Court.

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1

A.T.J., no.490, August 1913, p.14.

2

These were the Ballarat Typographical Society; the Barrier Typographical Society (Broken Hill); the Goldfields Typographical Society (Kalgoorlie); and the Tasmanian Typographical Society, which, despite its name, operated only in Hobart, since Launceston and the other northern towns were within the jurisdiction of the M.T.S. None of the records of the Tasmanian Society survive, and only pieces are left of the Barrier and Goldfields Minutes.

3

Melbourne delegates at the 1913 Conference of the A.T.U. argued that they wished to issue a circular with the ballot papers advising their members to vote 'No'. Since its contents could have been used by Labor's opponents in the 1910 Referendum campaign, they decided to postpone the ballot until after the Referendum. This was beyond the time allowed by A.T.U. Council.

4

A.T.J., no.494, December 1913, pp.27-29. Rule XVIII was loosely worded. It had been previously read to mean that if a ballot was carried by a majority of members voting, then the result was binding on affiliated societies.

Much of the long and carefully-prepared statement that Mr. J.T. Vinnard read to the meeting raised legal objections to the adequacy of any award the Federal Court was likely to make. He made three main points: that the Court was unlikely to direct preference in employment for unionists, that it had no power to make a common rule, and that the possession of a federal award would not protect members against penal legislation passed by State parliaments. On the first point, he was undoubtedly right;<sup>1</sup> on the second point, he was technically right, but practically wrong;<sup>2</sup> and on the third he was wrong so long as the Society did not act independently.<sup>3</sup> But these objections were far more in the nature of rationalizations than reasons. The M.T.S. opposed Federal registration on far more practical grounds. Melbourne members - and one section in particular - considered that their wages were likely to be adversely affected by any award the Federal Court might grant.

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1

An amendment to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act in 1910 did give the Court power to award preference to unionists, all other things being equal. The Court however was extremely loth to award it; see the remarks of Mr Justice Higgins in an Engine Drivers' Case cited by Portus, The Development of Australian Trade Union Law, p.162.

By the time of the 1913 Conference, the Court had awarded preference to one union only - that of the Brisbane tramway men in 1912 - and here only because it was thought of as a necessary condition of the Union's survival.

2

See the Judgment of Mr Justice Barton in Whybrow's Case, as reported in Anderson, The Fixation of Wages in Australia, Melbourne, 1928, p.73. In practice however unions could obtain a common rule by naming all firms in their industry as respondents. State Wages Boards were co-operative in making determinations in similar terms that would pick up any firms that they had missed.

3

Where the dispute was of an interstate character, it was within the province of the Federal Court.

In real terms, the wage of the jobbing hand compositor in Melbourne was the highest in Australia, and the wage of the metropolitan daily hand compositor was the second highest. Both of these groups however had less to lose than the metropolitan daily Linotype operators who worked on piece rates. They were paid 3½d. a thousand ens, with 'block phat' besides.<sup>1</sup> Since Sydney and Perth newspaper agreements were based on 'flat' rates, Melbourne piece operators considered that they were in danger of losing an item already precious, but due to became even more valuable as the trend towards display advertisement in newspapers developed.<sup>2</sup> The number of M.T.S. members whose wages benefited from 'block phat' was relatively small, but they exercised an influence out of all proportion to their numbers.

There was nothing new about the preponderating influence of newspaper piece workers within the M.T.S., and at the 1913 Conference it was well maintained. Of the three delegates other than the permanent Secretary, two were piece work operators on daily newspapers.<sup>3</sup> That attested by the two legal opinions sought by the A.T.U.

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1

See Appendix B. In Melbourne, 'block phat' was payment for all the space taken by a block, as if the operator had set it line by line. It derived from the ancient right claimed by piece companionships to set the whole paper. See Metropolitan Daily Newspaper Agreement, Melbourne, 1914.

2

They were right in their estimate. By the mid-twenties, the 'phat' component of a newspaper piecework operator's pay was about 40 per cent. See letter of David Anderson to author, 30 June 1965. Confirmatory and additional information came from interviews with Edgar Baillie, and Les Cahill.

3

Letter and interviews cited above.

and quoted at Conference. Both dealt directly with the possible loss of privileges, and one dealt specifically with Linotype operators as a section. Mr. J.A. Arthur gave as his opinion that it was possible, although improbable, that the Federal Court would award wages lower than those already ruling, and Sir Walter James's view was that a State Award must yield to the supremacy of a Federal Award.<sup>1</sup> In 1913, both these opinions were misleading,<sup>2</sup> but they were no doubt sufficient to confirm the worst doubts of the highly privileged sections of the A.T.U.'s membership; and when such eminent authorities erred, a wrong view on the part of laymen was excusable.

Despite the extraordinary and continuing influence of newspaper piece workers within the M.T.S., it is highly doubtful that they could have carried the Society with them on the issue of Federal registration if others had not had some objections of their own. Vinnard's speech also stressed a great advantage of the Victorian Wages Board system to a union industrially strong. The M.T.S., alone of the typographical societies, was subject

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<sup>1</sup> A.T.J., no.494, December 1913, p.27.

<sup>2</sup>

They ignored the decision of the High Court in Whybrow's Case, 1910. A majority ruled that the Court had no power to make an award inconsistent with the law of a State, but further held that an award fixing a higher minimum rate of wages than that fixed by a State Wages Board was not for that reason alone inconsistent with the State Determination. This decision was interpreted by the Arbitration Court to mean that it could legally fix a minimum rate higher than that prescribed by a Wages Board, but not one lower. All Federal Awards were therefore made on the assumption that the minimum rates fixed could be increased but not decreased by State industrial authorities. This view of the Court did not change until 1926, in Clyde Engineering Co. v Cowburn. See Anderson, Fixation of Wages in Australia, pp.130-31. Mr. R. O'Dea, Barrister-at-Law confirms this view.



to no penalty for striking. What it had obtained, it had obtained by strike or threat of strike. The Society had over £11,000 at its disposal, and it considered that this had a great 'moral effect'. Its registration with the Federal Court would result in the loss of the right to strike, and strip the A.T.U. of a great advantage. 'Any advances obtained for printers throughout Australia' concluded Vinnard, 'must first be secured by a body in the free and independent position held by the Melbourne Typographical Society.'<sup>1</sup>

In this attitude the elements were mixed. The M.T.S. had for long been the premier Society of the Commonwealth, and the Master Printers undoubtedly accorded it more respect than any other.<sup>2</sup> It was jealous of its authority and found it difficult to accept subordination of its sovereignty to a body whose very life had depended on the good offices of the M.T.S.<sup>3</sup> The enthusiasm for Federal negotiation seemed to the Melbourne delegates somewhat ingenuous. Mr Justice Higgins was not going to live forever, nor would the Labor Party always control the Federal Parliament. Then the Act which controlled the Federal Court would be at the mercy of their political opponents, and there would be no escape. The Court was

<sup>1</sup>A.T.J., no.494, December 1913, p.29. The presence of a second union in the newspaper industry also meant that the M.T.S. could have been seriously embarrassed by loss of its right to strike. See letter of D. Anderson to author, 11 August 1965.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., the remarks of Mr. Patterson, at the Conference of Master Printers held at Melbourne reported in Wimble's Reminder. He 'thought it better to have a Board than be under the thumb of the M.T.S., who did practically as it liked...All the conditions they made must be kept by the employer, and if the employer doesn't do just what the workers say, then they threaten to go on strike.' See also Chapter VII on the incident between the M.T.S. and the V.M.P.A. over certificates of discharge. This system worked smoothly in S.A.

<sup>3</sup>Personal feuds between Charles Cock, Secretary of the A.T.U., and Messrs Sanderson and Elliott, of the M.T.S., would not have helped matters. See A.T.J., no.415, May 1907, p.3; and letter of Arthur Hubble to the author, 15 June 1965

not likely to raise rates in Australia's most highly-paid industry, and the prospects of loss for all far outweighed the possibility of advantage for some.

But the arguments of the Melbourne men changed the minds of no other delegates, and the motion for the registration of the A.T.U. with the Federal Arbitration Court was carried by 15 votes to 6.<sup>1</sup> From then on, the M.T.S. moved steadily further away. It damned the revision of the rules required for Federal registration as an attempt at 'unification'; its Half-Yearly Report in August 1914 stigmatized the whole scheme as a 'mad proposal'.<sup>2</sup> When the A.T.U. held its ballot on the re-wording of Rule XVIII, the Board of the M.T.S. issued a circular with the ballot paper advocating a 'No' vote, and got the result it wanted by 736 votes to 123.<sup>3</sup> A Special Meeting in February 1915 held to consider the draft of the revised A.T.U. rules decided to hold a ballot on these terms:

Are you in favour of altering the A.T.U. constitution from the present federal basis to one of unification, having for its object registration under the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Act? <sup>4</sup>

Members voted overwhelmingly against the proposal, the Board of the M.T.S. formally withdrew its delegates from

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<sup>1</sup>

A.T.J., no.494, December 1913, p.37.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., no.504, October, 1914, p.4.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., no.507, January 1915, p.8, and see M.T.S. Minutes, 14 November 1914. See Fn.4, p.320. The re-wording sought to tighten the clause up and limit its meaning so that the decision of a simple majority of those voting could bind all members of the A.T.U. The M.T.S. construed this as a preparation for forcing it to register with the Federal Court against its will.

<sup>4</sup>

Ibid., no.509, March 1915, p.6.

the A.T.U. Council.<sup>1</sup> When the Ballot papers arrived, it refused to distribute them among its members.<sup>2</sup>

All other Societies adopted the revised rules by overwhelming majorities.<sup>3</sup> The A.T.U. held its last Council Meeting in Melbourne on 4 December, and by resolution dissolved itself. A new organization, the Printing Industry Employees' Union of Australia, held its inaugural meeting two days later.<sup>4</sup>

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### British and Australian Typographical Societies

After 1900, both the British and Australian printing industries shared much the same pattern of technical change. In both compositors declined as a proportion of the industry's workforce. The incidence of unemployment among them was however quite different. Whereas unemployment among British compositors worsened until the outbreak of war,

<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., no.514, August 1915, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., no.515, September 1915, p.7.

<sup>3</sup>

The A.T.U. managed to issue some ballot papers directly to M.T.S. members. They voted for adoption of the new rules by 186 to 22. Results in other Societies were:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
N.S.W. Typographical Association	1025	71
Queensland Typographical Association	388	20
South Australian Typographical Association	246	58
W.A. Typographical Industrial Union	112	5
Tasmanian Typographical Society (Hobart)	81	3
Goldfields Typographical Society (Kalgoorlie)	40	0
Ballarat Typographical Society	33	7
Barrier Typographical Society	22	3

<sup>4</sup>

A.T.J., no.518, December 1915, pp.23-25. The change of name was necessary because the term 'typographical' had been inappropriate ever since the societies had begun to admit sections of the printing industry whose members had little to do with type.

typographical unemployment in Australia declined steadily after 1907. This difference had some important consequences for the Australian societies. It not only helps account for a good deal of their bargaining success, but also explains an institutional variation from the British model.

In the eighties, the colonial typographical societies had instituted benefit funds with as much enthusiasm as the British. That they did not adopt the full range of benefit schemes<sup>1</sup> was partly the result of their comparatively small size, and partly the result of their interest in strike action. In the nineties, the societies suspended their unemployed benefit funds as a matter of sheer necessity; mindful of their ruinous effect, they re-introduced them only partially in the early 1900's. By the time their funds were secure enough to offer full-scale unemployment benefits, there was little need for them and the societies found that they could attract membership far less expensively through the extension of the 'closed shop' system.<sup>2</sup>

More striking than this institutional difference between British and Australian societies is the contrast between their attitudes towards closer organization and arbitration. British typographical societies were neither able to agree on any plan for their own union, nor achieve any satisfactory relationship with other printing unions; all the major Australian societies except one had joined in a national union by 1916, and that Union was open to all employees in the printing industry. The British societies

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1

Neither the A.T.U. nor any of its constituent Societies introduced a Superannuation Fund, although by 1880 both the L.C.S. and T.A. had each established one. The Australian Societies however established all their other principal benefit schemes.

2

See above, p. 278

showed continued and increasing distrust of arbitration; by 1916 the societies in all the Australian states except Victoria had registered with the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, through the P.I.E.U.A.

These differences are best considered together. For reasons discussed in the previous chapter, the Australian typographical societies were far weaker than the British in the first few years of the new century. With the trade union movement in ruins, wages boards and arbitration courts were welcome.

The boards and the courts promoted the unification of the industry. In Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia the printing industry was as yet too small for many unions to have developed in the kindred trades. The typographical societies took over the organization of the kindred trades for fear that awards and determinations secured by inexperienced men (who in the wages board hearings could even be agents of the employers) would endanger their own established privileges.

In New South Wales, the industry was already too large to admit of this, and the N.S.W.T.A. came into serious conflict with unions in the kindred trades. Ironically, this very disunity helped to promote the union of typographical societies at national level, since the N.S.W.T.A. saw the Commonwealth Arbitration Court as a means of superseding the multi-union arrangement of the Sydney printing industry.

The N.S.W.T.A. certainly had no particular reason for leaving the state arbitration system, which had provided it with a valuable series of awards. The awards were valuable to it not because they increased compositors' wages - the wage presented by the 1908 Award represented no advance for most compositors, and subsequent revisions barely increased the award wage in accordance with the rising cost of living - but because they guaranteed the

means by which the supply of skilled labour would be restricted, principally through the establishment of apprenticeship ratios and limits.

Other societies were not nearly so happy with their labour tribunals or their determinations. Both the S.A.T.A. and the Q.T.A. were dissatisfied with the working of their wages boards, and after 1912, neither seemed to have any immediate prospect of improving matters by direct action. They therefore sought escape to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. By 1916, the dual system of arbitration in Australia had impelled both the organization of the kindred trades by typographical societies, and then the national union of the societies themselves.

Of the major typographical societies, only the M.T.S. refused to commit itself to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. Through the whole period, it had made as little use as possible of the State Wages Board, and relied ultimately for its bargaining strength on its capacity to strike. In other words, the M.T.S., alone of the societies, operated very much the same way after the nineties as before. This seems to have resulted from the Wages Board's failure to temper the attitude of the Melbourne Master Printers towards restrictions on the employment of apprentices. The M.T.S. regarded the achievement of the overall 1 : 3 standard - which the Master Printers of Sydney conceded<sup>1</sup> - as crucial. When the Wages Board had failed to make the Master Printers yield, the M.T.S. decided that they would have to be made to yield in other ways. Forced to rely on its own strength in this matter, the M.T.S. found (in the conditions of reviving trade) that this was sufficient,

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Available records of the Master Printers Associations do not help explain why Masters in Melbourne should have been more stubborn on this point than those in Sydney.

and applied the same principle with great success in its other affairs. Of all the Australian societies in this period, it was most like the L.S.C., and its similarity extended to its attitudes towards the Labor Party.

Both British and Australian societies showed an increasing interest in the representation of working men in parliament in these years, but in both cases it was an interest marked by considerable reservation. The S.T.A. did not re-establish its political fund at all after the Trade Union Act of 1913. The L.S.C. did, but a large minority of its members contracted out. Of the Australian societies, the Q.T.A. delayed affiliation until after 1912; the S.A.T.A. had great trouble in enforcing a levy for the Labor paper; the W.A.T.I.U. and the M.T.S. affiliated, but seem to have shown very little interest in the affairs of the Party; and the N.S.W.T.A., despite its close connections with the Labor Party, elected as its president for long periods a man of known anti-Labor views.

The histories of the British typographical societies permit no more than random guesses at the reasons for the reluctance of the S.T.A. and the L.S.C. to support the Labor Party. The reasons for the Australian societies' lack of interest are also rather obscure. With recovery, each of them concentrated more narrowly on the improvement of their own wages and conditions, and interest in social revolution was slight, except in Queensland, where the 1912 strike convinced the Q.T.A. once more that the emancipation of labour depended on the abolition of the capitalist system.

This concentration on trade matters reflected itself also in the retirement of the typographical societies from trade union politics as well. At a time when the L.S.C. was urging the closer organization of the T.U.C. on industrial lines, the two largest Australian typographical societies were

retreating from joint action with other unions. The M.T.S. donated generously to other unions, but avoided involvement in their affairs. The N.S.W.T.A. guarded its 'autonomy' jealously, and was in almost perpetual disagreement with the Labor Council.

The immediate reasons for the separatism of the N.S.W.T.A. at least are fairly clear. Involvement in a strike risked its precious awards, and the Association took a point of view that its first responsibility was its own members' welfare. Whether withdrawal from the trade union movement and lack of interest in replacing capitalism reflected a fundamental change in the attitude of composers towards their employers is difficult to say. Successes scored through arbitration certainly strengthened the arguments of men who denounced strikes, and advanced the theory of harmony of interest between employer and employee. These views were put most strongly in the N.S.W.T.A. where the arbitration system worked to its greatest advantages for composers. But even here, they were subject to strong challenge.

Their strength in the M.T.S. is still harder to assess. For reasons discussed in Chapter IV, the M.T.S. had never shown any great interest in the Labor Party before the Society's struggle for survival in the nineties. After its recovery, it reverted to its methods of the eighties, and seems not to have been prepared to risk division by unnecessary involvement in 'politics'. Its refusal to take a greater interest in trade union affairs can be explained similarly in terms of caution. But this does not necessarily mean that the theory of harmony of interests was more strongly held. The M.T.S. was firm enough for strike action when it did not get its way.



Of the other societies, resistance towards commitment to the labour movement seems to have been strongest in the S.A.T.A., where the Daily Herald levy caused serious trouble; still, the Daily Herald eventually got its money. After 1910, the W.A.T.I.U. committed itself far more strongly to the labour movement, when both the movement and the society was stronger; and after the 1912 strike, the Q.T.A. was as strong for social revolution as it had ever been.

\* \* \*

By 1916, the typographical societies of all States except Victoria had joined in a union that was essentially different from any organization of employees in the British printing industry. The P.I.E.U.A. was a union, and not a federation; it had national coverage; other printing craftsmen outnumbered the compositors within it; and it was committed to a system of compulsory arbitration. The remainder of this thesis will concern itself with explaining how and why the P.I.E.U.A. obtained its first Commonwealth award; and how and why the typographical society that had remained aloof was induced to join it.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ONE BIG UNION OF PRINTERS

The legal requirements of Federal registration in 1916 gave the Printing Industry Employees' Union some of the principal features of the form it still retains; the reaction of its members to the events of the First World War and the early post-war years added the others. Between 1916 and 1920 the P.I.E.U.A. became the One Big Union of Printers. This was a result not of a series of haphazard amalgamations, but of a consciously-directed policy that served many ends simultaneously. In the final form of the Union, however, chance had its say.

The Economy and the Labour Movement

When the war broke out, the Commonwealth Statistician's Cost-of-Living Index figure for Sydney stood at 1208. By the end of 1916, it was 1388 - a rise of almost a sixth. The index numbers for other capitals showed similar increases.<sup>1</sup> Probably the cost of living rose even more

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1

Commonwealth Statistician's Retail Price Index Numbers, Food, Groceries and Housing (all houses) (weighted Average, Six Capitals, Year 1911 = 1,000)

	<u>Sydney</u>	<u>Melbourne</u>	<u>Brisbane</u>	<u>Adelaide</u>	<u>Perth</u>	<u>Hobart</u>	<u>Six Capitals</u>
Third Quarter 1914	1208	1120	1005	1156	1164	1091	1150
Third Quarter 1916	1388	1300	1147	1278	1287	1259	1316

Source: Anderson, The Fixation of Wages...p.244. This series is used for all cost of living comparisons between capital cities in this chapter and the next.

than these figures show,<sup>1</sup> and certainly, the business of living became much harder for those who lost their jobs. In the last quarter of 1914, unemployment among trade unionists throughout the Commonwealth reached 11 per cent, and in Queensland, the State most affected, it reached almost 18 per cent. There was no appreciable fall in the Commonwealth figure until the last quarter of 1915, when the rate began to flatten out around six per cent; in Queensland, ten per cent of trade unionists were still unemployed at the end of 1915.<sup>2</sup>

Those who remained in employment soon found that arbitration courts and wages boards were most reluctant to raise their wages in measure with the rising cost of living. Judges of both Federal and State jurisdictions spoke of the need of keeping wages to their pre-war levels.<sup>3</sup> In New South Wales, Premier Holman hinted within a day or so of the outbreak of war that the industrial law might have to be suspended for the duration. Two wages board chairmen took him at his word, and refused to sit. Mr Justice Heydon endorsed their view, and by the end of the year 59 industrial groups had lost the protection of their awards. His Honor modified his opinion in January 1915, but he made it clear that the 'living wage' was not to keep pace with rises in the Commonwealth Statistician's

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1

The prices of miscellaneous items probably rose faster than those of the items included in the regimen of this index.

2

Labor Reports, nos. 8 and 12.

3

For the pronouncements of politicians and judges on this subject see Turner, 'Industrial Labour and Politics', p.128b.

figures; and it did not.<sup>1</sup> Nor did those with margins above the living wage escape their share of the burden. Such increases as were granted in the living wage were not passed on to margins except in a fractional and diminishing way, so that to a wage of £4 a week or more, no increase applied.

The N.S.W. Labor Council felt strongly enough about Mr Justice Heydon's views to hint at a 'general industrial eruption' and request his removal from the Presidency of the Court.<sup>2</sup> Their opinion of the inadequacy of arbitration became more common as inflation proceeded, and as the trade unions' criticism of the arbitration system mounted, so did their criticism of the Labor parties. This was most marked in New South Wales where W.A. Holman narrowly escaped a vote of censure at the Easter Conference of 1915 for his failure to cope with rising prices, his excessive enthusiasm for the war, and his lack of interest in the welfare of trades unionists. Both the New South Wales and the Federal Labor parties drew censure over the abandonment of the Prices Referendum which was to have been held in December 1915. There was, it seemed, going to be no conscription of wealth for the winning of the war. The fat capitalist would wax fatter while the working class made all the sacrifices.

The prevalence of this view helps explain why some trade unions turned to direct action so easily in 1916. In that year, the Waterside Workers' Federation virtually

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1

F.A.A. Russell, Australian Industrial Problems, Sydney, 1918, chapters II and III.

2

N.S.W. Labor Council Minutes, 17 December 1914.

compelled the Commonwealth to supersede its own arbitration machinery and grant Federation members substantial wage increases. The miners at the Barrier and on the coal fields won a forty-four hour week. Altogether, strikes in 1916 accounted for the loss of 1.7 million man-days. Even so, they did not perhaps in themselves contribute so much to political turmoil as did the Conscription Referendum.

The labour movement, and conspicuously the Labor parties had been enthusiastic about the war at its outbreak. Enthusiasm waned as losses mounted, prices rose, and wages lagged behind. There was more sympathy for opinions like those of the Labor Call, which argued that capitalists made war, politicians declared them and parsons blessed them but workers had to fight them. While the Labor parties and individual trade unions manoeuvred cautiously, the Trades and Labour councils became the chief organizers of the 'No!' campaign. After two months of spectacular debate, lurid journalism, and physical violence, 'No' prevailed at the polls. The result split the Labor parties hopelessly in all States except Queensland, in which State alone the governing Labor Party did not lose office to a Nationalist Party formed from a coalition of ex-Labor men and their erstwhile political opponents.

When Mr W.M. Hughes, once Labor now Nationalist Prime Minister, decided on a second referendum a year later, the attitude of the labour movement towards the war had hardened to the point where sections of it opposed even voluntary recruitment. In Melbourne, the Trades Hall Council called on the Labor Party to direct its parliamentarians to take no further part in the

recruiting campaign. In Sydney, the Labor Council decided by 101 votes to 75 not to take part in any recruiting campaign, and called on workers of all countries to press their governments for an immediate armistice on all fronts.

The clearest gainers from the events of 1914-17 were the sections of the Industrial Workers of the World. The 'Wobblies' had consistently opposed recruitment, scorned the arbitration system, and urged direct action. Contemporary events seemed to have vindicated them on these matters. The numbers of those who joined their organizations and accepted with enthusiasm the idea of class warfare and its prosecution by sabotage and arson always remained small. The I.W.W. never did constitute the threat to Australia's safety that Hughes alleged during the passage of the legislation that extinguished it by the end of 1917. But it is true that its influence was greater than the numbers of its membership suggested. This was most conspicuously illustrated by the success of its propaganda for the idea of the One Big Union, but I.W.W. songs and slogans were prominent in the conduct of a good many war-time strikes, and the I.W.W. Journal, Direct Action, took much credit for some notable victories.

The biggest strike of the war years, the so-called General Strike of 1917, owed very little to I.W.W. organization. Its occasion was the introduction of a time-card system into the tramway workshops at Randwick, N.S.W. The engineers walked off the job, and railwaymen, wharf labourers, seamen, and miners joined them. 'The difficulty', wrote the Secretary of the Labor Council, 'was not in getting men to come out, but to keep them in'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> N.S.W. Labor Council Report, 31 December 1917, quoted Turner, 'Industrial Labour and Politics', p.253.

At its peak, the strike involved more than a quarter of union members in New South Wales, but it was ill-timed and lacked clear direction - indeed, its spontaneity scarcely permitted direction. The men were forced back to work on the Government's terms. Strike leaders were prosecuted, unions were de-registered, company unions were registered in their place, and strikers were victimized. This crushing defeat caused the Labor Council to take the question of closer organization very seriously.

Schemes for the linking-up of unions under some higher governing authority had been almost annual propositions at the Inter-Colonial Conferences of the eighties, and the arrival of the I.W.W. in Australia had set off another discussion of Big Unions in which unions took a great interest after 1914 when I.W.W. propaganda began to make real headway. But there was a great difference between the traditional Australian plans for big unionism, and the kind proposed by the I.W.W. Most of the former were based on craft or regional units, and usually conceded considerable autonomy to the component unions. The I.W.W. plan for One Big Union aimed to break down the differences between skilled and unskilled by basing its organization on industrial sections, to which members would belong irrespective of the craft they followed. Only this form could ensure that 'an injury to one' would become 'an injury to all'.

Although the I.W.W. as an organization had virtually ceased to exist by the end of 1917, there were plenty of men on the N.S.W. Labor Council who preferred its principles of industrial organization to those put forward from time to time by the craft unions. After the failure of the strike, the Labor Council Secretary, E.J. Kavanagh,

submitted a plan for the re-organization of unions that allowed for the autonomy on which affiliated craft unions had always insisted. The Committee set up to report on it replaced it with one which showed strong I.W.W. influence. The new One Big Union was called the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia; its secretary was J.S. Garden, who replaced E.J. Kavanagh as Secretary of the Labor Council.

The W.I.U.A. attracted all the opposition that had combatted the I.W.W.'s scheme for One Big Union. Its principal opponent was the Australian Workers' Union (which thought of itself as the One Big Union), but it also suffered at the hands of skilled unions who feared that direction by the unskilled might destroy the privileges of their crafts. Labor parliamentarians were worried at its frank reliance on the strike weapon. By September 1920 it was clear that the attempt to build up the W.I.U.A. as a separate organization had failed, and there began a long process of compromise and accommodation that resulted finally in the formation of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

But unions in the post-war years had been concerned with other things besides Big Unionism. After the first period of rapid inflation in 1914-15, the rate of increase in the cost of living had flattened out for the rest of the war, only to rise again in the immediate post-



war years by about a third within two years.<sup>1</sup> Strikes for increased wages were common. In 1919 they resulted in the loss of 6.3 million man-days.

In the midst of this activity for higher wages, the idea gained ground that benefits from wage increases were largely illusory. But shorter hours, it was argued, represented a solid gain, and they had the merit of spreading work in times of unemployment. In 1919, some craft unions in Sydney began a campaign for the forty-four hour week. Early in 1920, skilled building tradesmen in Sydney and Melbourne began an organized refusal to work on Saturday morning. By the end of the year, the N.S.W. Labor Government had legislated to proclaim the forty-four hour week in various industries, and in the Federal Court Mr Justice Higgins had made it clear by his decision in Timber Workers' Case that his Court was prepared to grant by Award what New South Wales proposed by legislation. But by this time, industrial militancy was already passing its peak, and in the next few years unions became more willing to confine their tactics within the ambits of State and Federal arbitration systems.

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1

Commonwealth Statisticians Retail Price Index Numbers, Food, Groceries and Housing (all houses).

	<u>Sydney</u>	<u>Melbourne</u>	<u>Brisbane</u>	<u>Adelaide</u>	<u>Perth</u>	<u>Hobart</u>	<u>Six Capitals</u>
Fourth Quarter 1918	1449	1383	1301	1349	1223	1366	1387
Fourth Quarter 1919	1656	1567	1543	1531	1436	1609	1587
Fourth Quarter 1920	1894	1892	1637	1816	1618	1948	1848

Source : Labor Report, no.11.

### The Labour Movement and the N.S.W. Branch

The turmoil of the years 1916-20 did not leave the printing unions untouched. All of them felt the effects of the rising cost of living and the reluctance of arbitration courts and wages boards to raise wages to keep pace with prices. Only the Queensland Branch of the P.I.E.U.A. escaped serious division of its members over the conscription issue, and even there debate was sharp. The Printing Trades Journal ran articles on workers' control of industry, and from 1919 'Iconoclast' ran a column called 'The Red Flag'. By this time the Western Australian Branch and the Victorian Typographical Society were preparing for strikes in support of a 44 hour week. In New South Wales members were involved in no major strike but it was there that unrest was greatest, and division deepest; and it was the New South Wales Branch that campaigned most energetically for the One Big Union of Printers.

By 1914, the N.S.W.T.A. controlled a larger proportion of printing trade employees than it had ever done, and its membership included those in the Government Printing Office who for years had refused to join. The preference of its leadership for arbitration was so strong that since 1894 it had taken no official part in any strike. The corollary to this principle was commitment to the policy of Labor representation in Parliament. Within a few years, unemployment, inflation and conscription produced strong challenge to arbitration policy.

The war did not affect employment in the New South Wales printing industry nearly so much as in some others, but it did cause a considerable increase in the usually low percentage figure of unemployed. This reached 5.4 per cent for the first quarter of 1915, and then declined until the first quarter of 1917, when it rose to

5.8 per cent.<sup>1</sup> In January 1917 the Government Printer dismissed fifty compositors, and announced his intention of sacking yet more. To forestall this the Executive of the N.S.W.T.A. decided to recommend a plan of work-sharing that had been in operation at the Sydney Morning Herald for some time. This the Father of the Chapel at the Government Printing Office characterized as 'absurd and ridiculous'. He resigned as Vice-President of the Union, and the policy lapsed.

The Executive also had trouble with some of its employees covered by agreement with the newspaper proprietors. On 17 February 1917, casual publishers at the Sunday Times went on strike over rates of pay.

President Stanbridge reported that

only the high standing of the Association at last induced the Managing Director to consent to the men being re-instated. He had met the men, and told them that Agreements must be observed on both sides; and that they must give assurance there would be no recurrence(sic) of the trouble; otherwise (he) would have advised the Directors to put in a new staff.<sup>2</sup>

The Board censured the men. There was no 'recurrence' of striking at this or any other newspaper. Nor were there any strikes in the commercial shops, but in them dissatisfaction ran deeper and lasted longer. Its root was the failure of the Wages Boards and the Court to adjust wages to rises in the cost of living.

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1

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 13 December 1917, report that the Unemployment Fund was exhausted through 'heavy calls made on it during the past year'. The figures are from Table 24 of E.R. Walker, 'Unemployment in Australia', M.A. thesis, Sydney University, 1930.

2

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 3 March 1917.

In March 1913, the Court had granted the hand compositor a weekly wage of 65 shillings. At that time, the Commonwealth Statistician's All-Items Cost of Living Index figure for Sydney stood at 1171;<sup>1</sup> by the first quarter of 1916 it had reached 1419, and the hand compositor's wage was 13.7 shillings below its 1913 equivalent. Still neither Board nor Court would consent to adjust the figure until March 1917, and even then the adjustment still left the wage 4.5 shillings behind. When in October 1919 the New South Wales Board of Trade increased the Living Wage to £3.17s., the hand compositor found himself with a wage that was 2s.6d. below this figure, and in real terms 18s.6d. below his 1913 wage. A decision of the Court in December raised him handsomely, but by the third quarter of 1920 he was again badly behind.<sup>2</sup>

Compared with the far smaller section of machine compositors in commercial shops, the hand compositor was well off. Just before the outbreak of war, these men had had their wages reduced by Mr Justice Heydon to £3.15s.

1

To base 1911 = 1,000, weighted average, six capitals.

2

Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial), Sydney, 1913-20, related to Commonwealth Statistician's Retail Price Index Numbers, Food, Groceries, Rent (all houses), six capitals weighted average 1911 = 1,000.

	<u>Money Wage</u> <u>(shillings)</u>	<u>Index</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>1913 Wage</u> <u>Adjusted</u> <u>To Index</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>Difference</u>
At 28 March 1913	65	1171	65	0
Fourth Quarter 1914	65	1203	66.7	-1.7
Fourth Quarter 1915	65	1400	77.7	-12.7
First Quarter 1916	65	1419	78.7	-13.7
Fourth Quarter 1916	65	1374	76.2	-11.2
Fourth Quarter 1917	73.5	1425	79.1	- 5.6
Fourth Quarter 1918	73.5	1449	80.4	- 6.9
Fourth Quarter 1919	97	1656	91.9	+ 5.1
Third Quarter 1920	97	1937	107.5	-10. 5
Fourth Quarter 1920	105	1894	105.1	- 0.1

a week, and at that level they remained for the rest of the war. Other sections of the industry managed some adjustment in 1917, and fared relatively about as well as the hand compositor.

Dissatisfaction with the established arbitration policy reached its peak in March 1917, when Mr. Justice Heydon made his first adjustment to the hand compositor's wage and left it in real terms well short of the 1913 level. E.C. Magrath, then Secretary of the N.S.W. Branch, described the Judgment as throwing 'gratuitous insults' at the compositor. President Stanbridge considered his Honor had only made 'pretence of hearing', and regarded the decision as poor reward for the Association's 'loyalty'. His remedy was the Federal Court; but Mr Weir, from McCarron, Stewart & Co., alluded to more drastic measures when he advocated 'adopting other methods of securing what we desire'.<sup>1</sup> A few months later, W.J. Ratcliffe, perhaps the most vocal advocate of arbitration policy over the previous fifteen years, announced that he 'considered arbitration had outlived its usefulness'.<sup>2</sup>

The failure of the 1917 General Strike and the reprisals made on unions caused a rapid collapse of much of this enthusiasm for militancy. Then, when the war ended, unemployment rapidly diminished,<sup>3</sup> and over-award payments offered by several employers made the decisions of the Board and the Court irrelevant for many

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1

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 31 March 1917.

2

Ibid., 18 August 1917.

3

Actually, it fell below two per cent in the third quarter of 1918, and below one per cent in the first quarter of 1920. See Walker, 'Unemployment in Australia', table 24.

members.<sup>1</sup> The Court began to make more frequent adjustments, and although the Margins Judgment of May 1919 was very unpopular, members were more willing to accept a transfer to the Federal Court as an acceptable alternative. This resulted from the formal estrangement of the N.S.W. Branch from the militant section of the labour movement, a process which began during the campaigns for 'Yes' and 'No' votes at the First Conscription Referendum.

From the outset the Branch Board of Management handled the conscription issue gingerly. Although it had power to deal with the request, it referred to a Special General Meeting - called by requisition of 25 members - the question of donating funds to the Anti-Conscription Campaign.<sup>2</sup> At the same meeting, it rejected a recommendation from the Labor Council to take part in a one-day stoppage to discuss the conscription question. In view of what happened at the General Meeting, this was a wise decision.

Over two hundred members attended the Conscription Meeting of 21 October. Preliminary attempts to rule the proceedings out of order failed, and Mr Walburn moved 'That this meeting is opposed to conscription'. Speakers for the motion contended that the voluntary system provided sufficient recruits, and that conscription aimed

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1

There is no reliable information about over-award payment in the industry, but the Board meeting of 6 December 1919 resolved that in its opinion margins held above the previous award rates should be transferred to the new rates. The extremely low level of unemployment and the rapid rise in the cost of living make it likely that over-award payment was fairly common.

2

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 7 October 1916.

at the disruption of unionism. The meeting only got as far as hearing one speaker against. He had come to do what he could to prevent the 'Germanization' of Australia, and considered the man who did not support elected leaders on this matter 'a traitor to his country'. Uproar followed, and after the confusion died a little an amendment for adjournment sine die was carried by 113 votes to 100.

This unfortunately was not the end of the story. On the same evening as the General Meeting, the Board received a request from the Labor Council to ask proprietors of daily newspapers to give equal space to 'Yes' and 'No' statements on the referendum. Board members took this to mean that they were not merely to make a polite request and leave it at that. Mr Spicer considered that 'a more ridiculous proposal...could not be conceived', and Mr Bullôt thought that 'To attempt to dictate the policy of a newspaper would be the height of absurdity'.<sup>1</sup> The Board decided to advise the Labor Council to make the request itself. This was not nearly good enough for some of the more ardent spirits of the Labor Council and the Trade Union Congress. A circular issued by the authority of the latter called upon typographical members to attend another meeting on conscription, and Mr E.E. Judd, a prominent member of the Socialist Party and delegate to the Labor Council, apparently attempted to induce the publishers at the Sydney Morning Herald to strike.<sup>2</sup>

Judd continued to twist the knife. On his motion, the Labor Council resolved that affiliated unions be requested to withdraw those delegates who had worked for conscription at the referendum, and replace them with others.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 21 October 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 4 November 1916.

This resulted in two notices of motion for the Annual N.S.W.T.A. Meeting, one requesting rescission of the Labor Council motion, and the other seeking disaffiliation. The second was withdrawn at the meeting; the first was defeated by only seven votes, and relations between the N.S.W. Branch and Council were badly strained.

Relations with the Labor Party were no better. As late as August 1916, the membership had ratified affiliation by a vote of almost three to one. But after the Referendum, the Board refused to vote £20 in response to an appeal for election funds, and the vote on the some motion at the Annual General Meeting resulted in a tie. A motion for disaffiliation was withdrawn at the request of President Stanbridge.<sup>1</sup>

With this behind them, the Board were scarcely enthusiastic about entering into the campaign for the second referendum. When finally it did receive a request from the Labor Council for financial support and the calling of a special meeting of members, the Board decided by 29 votes to 11 that the request could not be complied with. Further, President Stanbridge ruled that this time there could be no meeting called by requisition of members, and declined to put a motion of dissent from his ruling.<sup>2</sup> The N.S.W. Branch took no part in the second anti-conscription campaign whatsoever; on the other hand both the Labor Party and the Labour Council were far more vigorous than they had been in the previous year. Using as a pretext new provisions in amendments to the Industrial Arbitration Act which threw some doubt on the legality of donations by

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 3 March 1917 and 17 March 1917.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 1 December 1917.



trade unions to political parties, the Board in May 1918 cancelled the Branch's affiliation with the Labor Party.<sup>1</sup> A month later it severed connection with the Labour Council.<sup>2</sup> But by this time its reasons for doing so had less to do with conscription than with the Council's promotion of industrial unionism.

This was an old bone of contention that had been unearthed by the I.W.W. and its propaganda for the One Big Union. Basically, the issue was for the N.S.W. Branch what it had been ten years before: whether it was going to surrender any part of what it called its 'autonomy' to some superior trade union body. Now that the Trades and Labour Council was dominated by 'extremists', 'pacifists' and even 'traitors', the issue took on some deafening emotional overtones. The Branch's policy towards the General Strike of 1917 was a gauge of the relative strength of those dissatisfied with the arbitration system, and those who wished to continue traditional policy.

What happened is by no means clear. It seems that E.J. Kavanagh's complaint that the Strike Committee had trouble in keeping the men in did not apply to the N.S.W. Branch. Yet there is evidence that some at least wanted to go out, and it is possible that the N.S.W. Branch Executive out of fear of the mixed reaction of members refused a request to strike by the Strike Management Committee without even referring the matter to the Board.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid., 4 May 1918

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid., 8 June 1918, and Half-Yearly Report, July 1918.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid., 8 June 1918.

But at the first Board Meeting after the outbreak of the strike, President Stanbridge told the Board that the Strike Management Committee had made a request only for financial help. Having regard to what could be 'safely' done, he recommended to a record attendance of Board members a voluntary levy of one shilling in the pound.<sup>1</sup>

A fascinating debate followed. Some members were opposed to the strike altogether. Mr W.W.C. Middleton said that he wanted to do the best we could by the men and that was to get them back to work as quickly as possible. Mr Gillespie reminded Board members that they were all shareholders in the Railway and Tramways, and the Government was the Board of Directors. Strikers must not flout the country. Mr Donovan could not understand all the fuss about a time card system. They had had one at the Government Printing Office for years.

Despite these arguments, the motion for a voluntary levy succeeded (among predictions of failure) by 55 votes to nil. In all, some £600 was collected, but the Branch took no other part in the strike. In his Half-Yearly Report, President Stanbridge noted that

The biased reports of daily papers inflamed the minds of the Unionists, and a cry was raised that their issue should be stopped. Public utterances, abusive of our attitude, by some persons who had no warrant to speak with any authority tended to create uneasiness in our ranks.

But the Branch's 'autonomy was jealously guarded'.<sup>2</sup> After the failure of the strike, the influence of those opposed to direct action strengthened.

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 18 August 1917.

<sup>2</sup>

Half-Yearly Report, 5 January 1918.

As it became clearer that the Labor Council favoured that form of industrial organism that aimed to subordinate even skilled craftsmen to the interests of the unskilled if 'extremists' so decided, the N.S.W. Branch stressed and re-stressed the importance of its autonomy. In April, the Board indicated its preference for E.J. Kavanagh's scheme for the federation of unions in traditional style;<sup>1</sup> within the month, it had formulated one of its own for submission to the Trades Union Congress. By then, its plan for the federation of unions had become the basis of a rival organization to the Labor Council. Despite their denials, it is highly likely that Stanbridge and Magrath organized the breakaway group. It was too much to believe, a Board member said, that '25 individuals had wandered by psychic force into our rooms'.<sup>2</sup>

At the Board meetings of 1 and 8 June, both Stanbridge and Magrath were quite explicit on their reasons for breaking away from the Trades and Labour Council. There was a tinge of regret in Magrath's statement:

The economic interests of all workers were identical, but the question here was whether we could follow the movement in its present drift to extremism. It was not the policy of the Labor movement. He instanced the One-day Strike, the 1917 Strike, and the One Big Union on I.W.W. lines. The Labor movement for four years was behind the voluntary recruiting scheme. The Labour Council was now against it...Council's industrial policy would cause us to change our policy, or be embroiled in disputes which the Council may enter upon.

Stanbridge's attitude was stiffer:

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<sup>1</sup>

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 6 April 1918.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 8 June 1918.

We would not be carried at the heels of revolutionaries. There was no room for revolution in Australia, where we have had five Labor governments at the one time, and can have them again....It had been suggested that we should retain connection with the Labor Council because of economic interests. We had no economic interest in common with the One Big Union scheme proposed by the Council which aimed to begin with a strike and end with a revolution.

Most of the other speakers supported Stanbridge and Magrath. They spoke of 'extremists', and complained of the Council's habit of discussing 'the affairs of a foreign country'. Even the Council's supporters admitted it was 'too political'. The motion endorsing the President and Secretary's action in attending the breakaway meeting was carried by 35 votes to 11, and the Board resolved on disaffiliation from the Labor Council. Its decision was ratified in a ballot of members by 1097 to 356.

#### The One Big Union of Printers in N.S.W., 1916-20.

In these troubled circumstances, the N.S.W. Branch's consistent campaigning for the One Big Union of Printers takes on a particular colour. From about 1908, the Typographical Societies in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia had begun opening their membership to workers in the printing industry who were not compositors, and the N.S.W. Branch had made a particular use of the slogan 'One Big Union of Printers' in its campaign for a Federal Award before 1916. Many of the arguments put forward then still applied. But by 1916 in New South Wales, some of the old arguments had a new twist, and there were some additional reasons. The slogan of 'One Big Union of Printers' served many ends.

Above all, it acted as a force for unity in a Branch badly divided. It provided an alternative to quarrels about conscription. It helped restore a sense of common purpose by appealing to both those who wished to abide by arbitration, and those who sought an alternative to it. Although the failure of the General Strike increased the influence of those who opposed direct action tactics, the vote on disaffiliation from the Labour Council after that body had shown its strong preference for industrial unionism revealed a minority too large to be ignored. In September 1918, despite the President's denunciations of the One Big Union - now the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia - the Board decided to hear its delegates at a Special Meeting.<sup>1</sup> The question of joining the W.I.U.A. never came up, though the Margin Judgment of 1919 revived dissatisfaction with State arbitration machinery.

Stanbridge and the Board had by then found that other reasons for continuing the Big Union campaign had strengthened. The desire to protect awards from the erosion of inferior rates granted to the smaller printing unions for overlapping categories of workers was one of the reasons that moved the N.S.W.T.A. to liberalize its membership about 1909. The more unions absorbed, the greater were the chances of overlapping with the unions still unamalgamated. When the N.S.W. Branch absorbed the Printing Trades Women and Girls Union, it intruded into the demarcation areas staked out by the Bookbinders. When it took over the Cardboard Box Employees' Union, it had to get

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 7 September 1918.

an award for guillotine operators who were in other respects also covered by the Bookbinders' Award. Quite aside from whatever motives of prestige he might have had,<sup>1</sup> President Stanbridge had plenty of reasons for adopting the slogan of the industrial unionism he so mistrusted.

Secretary Magrath, who unlike Stanbridge never spoke against industrial action per se, continued to support the One Big Union of printers on much the same principle he had stated at the first meeting of the P.I.E.U.A. Council. Arbitration Courts, he had then said, were impressed by big unions. At the debate on dis-affiliation from the Labour Council, he claimed that

The most militant unions had given ample evidence that arbitration was of advantage to them....Unionism needed to be built up.<sup>2</sup>

It was in pursuit of this aim that he had set about the absorption of the Printing Trades Women and Girls Union in 1916.

Trade Unions had first taken a regular interest in the organization of women during the war years, when they had begun to do what had always been considered as men's work. Trades and Labour councils in some states had appointed female organizers, but progress was slow, and as late as 1921 there were still only two trade union officials in Sydney who were women.<sup>3</sup>

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The few surviving Board members who can recall Stanbridge at this time think of him as an ambitious man.

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N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 8 June 1918.

3

P.T.J., vol.V, August 1921.

The printing unions had a more urgent interest in female labour than most others. The rapid increase in the production of printed products had meant a considerable rise in the number of women working in the industries as "finishers" - as collaters, numberers, folders, sewers, stitchers, quarter binders, and wrappers. This threatened the livelihood of certain male tradesmen.

The men most affected were the bookbinders. Sharp-eyed girls employed in the bindery too easily learnt the tradesman's knack. In 1907 the Victorian Bookbinders' Union lent the girls a hand in organizing a Women Bookbinders and Stationery Association, and their principal motive in doing so was to restrict the kind of binding work that girls could do. Not only the bookbinders feared for their jobs. Machinists who worked in commercial shops felt threatened by the employment of girls as feeders. In the production process, compositors were farthest away from the girls; but they recalled the attempts of employers to employ female typesetters in the eighties and nineties, and wondered how long they would be able to keep girls out of the composing room should the restrictions on their employment in the machine room and bindery fail. Before its demise, the old A.T.U. had made provision for member societies to admit female members, and the Q.T.A. (whose members had included bookbinders) had done so.<sup>1</sup>

In New South Wales, the Printing Trade Women and Girls' Union,<sup>2</sup> was formed in 1911, with both the Letterpress Machinists' Union and the N.S.W.T.A. lending the time of their secretaries for the purpose. In November 1912, with the help of the same gentlemen, the Women and Girls' Union

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<sup>1</sup>  
A.T.J., May 1915, no.511

<sup>2</sup>  
Henceforth referred to as the Women and Girls' Union.

had obtained its first award.<sup>1</sup> It was disappointing, and a further Award in December 1915 made little improvement. The highest rate it provided was 35 shillings a week for the senior quarter-binder - a sum little over half that paid to the hand compositor, and 13 shillings less than the £2.8s. Mr Justice Heydon had assessed as the male living wage. The female adult minimum was 23 shillings.<sup>2</sup>

A year later, E.C. Magrath told his Board that 'the time was ripe for amalgamation'. The Board had some doubts. Prejudice against women had flourished in the N.S.W.T.A. since its first brush over the employment of female compositors in the very first year of its existence, and old members of the Board could not accommodate themselves easily to the prospect of female members. The girls, they argued, were most properly the concern of the bookbinders, and to take them in would be inviting trouble with the Bookbinders' Union. This view did not prevail, and the Board recommended the amalgamation of the Women and Girls' Union to the General Meeting, which in its turn assented.<sup>3</sup>

The terms of their admission were interesting. Women and girls became members of the Branch on the condition that they would not transfer to any other section of the industry without the permission of the Board of Management. Specifically, they would not 'accept employment in the sections of the Industry now covered by male labor' and they would 'use every endeavour to discountenance any proposal to this end'. On questions which did not affect their interests, the Board of Management reserved the

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<sup>1</sup> N.S.W. Industrial Gazette, vol.II, December 1912, p.771.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol.VIII, November 1915, p.1414.

<sup>3</sup> N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 2, 11 and 16 December 1916.



right to exclude them from a general ballot of members. They were entitled to six representatives on the Board of Management, but they were debarred from representation by office (as for the rest of the trade), and from participating in the office selections. They were entitled to vote in the election of Branch officers only when one of the candidates was a woman.<sup>1</sup> The Women and Girls' Union accepted these conditions, and its first representatives took their seats on the Board in May 1917.

The same conditions applied to women and girls admitted to membership when the N.S.W. Branch absorbed the Cardboard Box Union two years later. This was a moribund body that had been formed about the same time as the Women and Girls' Union, but did not manage to obtain an Award until December 1918. The employers appealed but the Secretary was nowhere to be found. With the help of Miss Cashman,<sup>2</sup> Secretary of the Women and Girls' Advisory Committee, E.C. Magrath organized a meeting of the Cardboard Box Union which decided for amalgamation with the N.S.W. Branch. The Board meeting of 21 June admitted the members of the old Cardboard Box Union, and some other cardboard workers as well. With their admission, the Branch's campaign of extension reached the limit of its success, and it took on what is virtually its contemporary form.

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1

Ibid., 16 December 1916

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Miss Ellen Imelda Cashman; born 19 November 1891; began work in the printing industry in 1905; Secretary, Women and Girls' Section, N.S.W. Branch P.I.E.U.A., 1917-40; Member of Commission of Inquiry into the Basic Wage 1921-2; Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Inspector, 1940-51; Commonwealth Government's Representative, Women's Employment Board, 1942-4.

### The P.I.E.U.A. and the Victorian Printing Unions

While the N.S.W. Branch was absorbing the Women and Girls' and the Cardboard Boxmakers' Unions, the Federal Council of the P.I.E.U.A. had also been spending some energy in achieving the One Big Union of Printers. Like the N.S.W. Branch, it had inherited the practice of absorption. It also had to do its work while prices rose, wages struggled to catch up, other unions struck, and One Big Union propaganda flourished. Besides, it had difficulties of its own from which it wished to divert attention. As the years passed, and the Union still did not manage even to begin proceedings for a federal award, so it appeared increasingly without purpose.<sup>1</sup> For all these reasons, the Federal body's campaign for the One Big Union of Printers began quietly, but gathered increasing momentum.

As Federal President, S.J. Stanbridge's remarks on Big Unionism differed little from those he made as President of the N.S.W. Branch. He was for big unions, but against the One Big Union. After Stanbridge stepped down, the Federal Council's attitude remained basically the same. The 'Recreation Time Chats' - which the Council printed as pamphlets - emphasized the poor economy in having twelve printing unions in two States approaching different authorities for twelve different determinations. They lauded the work of the Australian Workers' Union, and put the view that the Labor Party in parliament was only as

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At the Council Meeting of 1919 the Western Australian delegate said that he thought the P.I.E.U.A. would have been wound up by then and some other form of Federal organization taken its place - Minutes of Meetings of P.I.E.U.A. Council, vol.I, p.130.

strong as the industrial movement outside it. They were opposed to the One Big Union and regarded the strike as a tactic to be used only in the last resort.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, in 1919, some concessions had to be made to militancy. The 'Recreation Time Chats' and another series of essays by 'Unity' adopted the language of their opponents in abuse of craft unions. Occasionally, they looked beyond hours and wages. 'Until men at their work can know themselves members of a self-governing community of workers, they will remain essentially servile', said 'Unity'. 'Democratisation of industry', he went on 'gives the worker the status of a free man'.<sup>2</sup> But most of the time they were concerned to defend Union policy against the charge that it was not militant enough. E.C. Magrath was stretching the Union's policy to its limit of militancy when he said in October 1919

that while the Union stood for arbitration, a position may arise when to strike would be the right thing, and this was the inalienable right of every worker.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth remembering that this remark was for consumption by the Victorian Typographical Society, who still held aloof from the P.I.E.U.A. on the grounds that they could manage things for themselves better by blending applications to the Wages Board with strike or threat of strike.

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'Recreation Time Chats', pamphlets re-printed in the P.T.J., vol.III, no.3, March 1919.

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P.T.J., vol.III, no.9, September 1919, p.222.

3

Ibid., no.90, October 1919, p.280.

The Federal Council's campaign for the One Big Union concentrated on Victoria, where none of the printing unions was part of the P.I.E.U.A. From the point of view of those who saw the Big Union as an aid to strike action, the policy made good sense. It made even better sense to those whose target was a Federal Award. The Commonwealth Arbitration Court had made it clear time and again that it was concerned with preserving equality of competition among the States. Thus it would not award conditions which it considered would penalize employers who had to compete with others in another State who were not bound by the same award. Unless the printing employees in all the States were parties to a Federal claim, Award rates and conditions would have to assimilate to those of the State or States that were not parties to the claim. For this reason, it seemed in these years most desirable that the P.I.E.U.A. should establish a Branch in Victoria before it lodged a claim with the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

Besides the Victorian Typographical Society, there were five other unions in the Victorian printing industry in 1916: the Printing Operatives' Union, the Lithographic Society, the Cardboard Box and Carton Employees, the Women Bookbinders and Stationery Employees, and the Bookbinders and Paper Rulers. The Federal Council of the P.I.E.U.A. determined to concentrate on the Bookbinders and Paper Rulers first.

The Victorian Bookbinders had existed continuously since 1878. They had early built a tight system of job control, but after the depression of the nineties, the introduction of folding, sewing, stitching and gluing machinery had resulted in perpetual disputes over work

being done by females or by members of other unions.<sup>1</sup> In 1904, the Victorian Bookbinders had become a Branch of a federated association which organized in all of the States except Tasmania. At its 1913 Conference this federated association decided on affiliation with the Australian Typographical Union. It postponed the creation of an interstate dispute in the expectation that the A.T.U. would amend its rules to provide for its affiliation.

Instead the A.T.U. turned itself into the Printing Industry Employees' Union, and registered with the Federal Arbitration Court, a constitution which provided for the membership of bookbinders and paper rulers.<sup>2</sup> The Bookbinders held a Special Meeting of their Federated Association to review their position. Affiliation was now out of the question, since the rules of the P.I.E.U.A. provided only for amalgamation. Their chances of Federal registration were slim, since the P.I.E.U.A.'s constitution already covered their members. Even if they did succeed in registering, there was little prospect of securing an Award on the Federated Association's income of £70 a year. Everything pointed to an amalgamation with the P.I.E.U.A., but here too there were difficulties. Many bookbinders feared subordination of their interests in the larger union, and the Victorians raised a matter of practical trade union politics. They did not want to jeopardise their relations with the Victorian Typographical Society. Delegates from

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For the six months ended 31 December 1917, the Minutes of the Victorian Bookbinders Society make no fewer than seven references to troubles caused by female labour or demarcation.

2

Minutes of Special Meeting of Bookbinders' Federal Council, 26 November 1917.

a Special Meeting of the Bookbinders' Association told the Federal Council of the P.I.E.U.A. in 1917 that they 'could not recommend anything until the situation in Victoria was cleared up'.<sup>1</sup>

Council took them at their word. At the dissolution of the old A.T.U., the affiliated societies had reached an Agreement which had severely limited the right of the P.I.E.U.A. to organize in Victoria. When Robert Elliott, Secretary of the Victorian Typographical Society, asked for a definition of the Agreement's meaning, S.J. Stanbridge told the First Council Meeting of the P.I.E.U.A. it meant that no Branch of the P.I.E.U.A. could be established in Victoria except in Ballarat, and there only with the members' consent.<sup>2</sup> In 1918, the Federal Council of the P.I.E.U.A. declared this Agreement 'obsolete'.<sup>3</sup> Next year, Council held its annual meeting in Melbourne, provided the services of Miss Cashman for organizing work among Women Bookbinders and Cardboard Box Makers, and proposed to the Bookbinders and the Cardboard Box Employees that they form the nucleus of a Victorian Branch that the V.T.S. would be one day persuaded to join.<sup>4</sup> They were assisted in their approach by a decision of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council that wherever possible smaller unions should be amalgamated so that there would be only one union in each industry. Under pressure from both the

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 27 November 1917.

<sup>2</sup>

A.T.J., no.524, June 1916 Supplement: Report of First Council Meeting of P.I.E.U.A.

<sup>3</sup>

Minutes of P.I.E.U.A. Council Meeting 1918, vol.I, p.79, and P.T.J., vol.II, no.10, October 1918, p.231.

<sup>4</sup>

Ibid., 1919, vol.I, p.117.

P.I.E.U.A. and the Trades Hall Council, the V.T.S. held amalgamation talks with the Bookbinders and the Cardboard Box Employees.

No amalgamation resulted from its propositions, nor from those of the P.I.E.U.A. Yet within a month or so the V.T.S. had succeeded in taking action which resulted in the establishment of a branch of the P.I.E.U.A. in Victoria. On 7 February 1920 the V.T.S. delegates to the Wages Board reported to their Board of Management that the Chairman by his casting vote had determined that the new wage for the hand compositor would be 92 shillings a week of 48 hours. The Board recommended members 'not to accept the rates fixed by the (Wages) Board, and that a wage be sought of not less than £5 per week of 44 hours'.<sup>1</sup> On 28 February all members of the V.T.S. in metropolitan jobbing offices ceased work. They stayed out for eleven weeks and two days, and so did the Bookbinders.

#### The Melbourne Printing Strike of 1920 and its Consequences

Wages for both compositors and bookbinders in Melbourne during the war had kept pace with prices far better than in Sydney and it was not until 1918 that they lagged more than three or four shillings behind their 1913 equivalents. In 1919, the cost of living in Melbourne rose steeply, and by the last quarter the journeyman bookbinder and compositor needed 13s.6d. and 14s.4d. to make up the difference between their money wage and the

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V.T.S. Board of Management Minutes, 7 February 1920.

money wage equivalent of their 1913 rates.<sup>1</sup> And this, to within a few pence was what the Determination gave them. But in January 1920 this was not enough. The V.T.S. wanted a substantial increase in real wages, and a reduction in hours as well. The 1920 Melbourne Printers' Strike was not simply a strike over wages, and at least two kinds of motive can be made out.

The first relates to the mood of the members. As early as 1916, a majority of them had voted to strike against a Wages Board Determination which left them 2s.6d. short of the amount needed to bring them up to their 1913 equivalent.<sup>2</sup> Their change in attitude towards conscription confirms the impression of increasing discontent. In July 1916, the Board refused to vote £5 to the Anti-Conscription Committee.<sup>3</sup> In November 1917, the same body voted £100 for the same cause.<sup>4</sup> The Board appointed delegates to the One Big Union Conference in the spring of 1918, and even after it had decided to take no further part in the proceedings of the

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Wages of Journeymen Bookbinders and Hand Compositors, Melbourne, 1914-20, related to Commonwealth Statistician's Retail Price Index.

	Journey- man Book- binder (shillings)	Hand Compo- sitor	Index No.	Book- binders' Wage 1914, Adjusted	Compo- sitors Wage 1914 Adjusted
at 30 Sept. 1914	64	66	1120	64.0	66.0
at 31 Dec. 1915	64	66	1322	75.5	77.9
" 31 Dec. 1916	71	73	1280	73.1	75.5
" 31 Dec. 1917	71	73	1308	74.8	77.0
" 31 Dec. 1918	76	78	1383	79.0	81.5
" 31 Dec. 1919	76	78	1567	89.5	92.3
" 31 Dec. 1920	96	96	1892	101.1	111.5

2

V.T.S. Board of Managment Minutes, 21 October 1916. The ballot was carried by 606:544. The Board considered this majority an insufficient basis for a strike.

3

Ibid., 22 July 1916.

4

Ibid., 17 November 1917.



One Big Union Movement, never directly opposed it in the manner of the N.S.W. Branch. Their support for what the N.S.W. Branch Board considered the proposals of extremists was much stronger. In August 1919, 39 Board members voted for a motion threatening to withdraw staff from newspapers unless they ceased 'their vicious and scurrilous attacks on trade unions and members thereof'.<sup>1</sup>

The Victorian Bookbinders had also had an unsettled history in the previous five years. In October, 1917 a ballot of members had endorsed a motion for a strike by 165:32,<sup>2</sup> but the Executive did not act on the result. This was presumably because of unemployment among members at the time. Unemployment in Books, Paper and Printing in Victoria was consistently higher than in New South Wales during 1918-9, and in the first quarter of 1919 reached 7.2 per cent.<sup>3</sup> Because of their problems over female labour and demarcation, bookbinders probably contributed more than their due share to these figures, and the lists of applications for unemployment relief support this view.

This long-standing discontent among both compositors and bookbinders helps explain why the 1920 strike remained solid for so long.<sup>4</sup> Two other remarkable features require

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<sup>1</sup>V.T.S. Board of Management Minutes, 9 August 1919.

The same kind of suggestion was used by the N.S.W. Board of Management to justify disaffiliation from the Labour Council.

<sup>2</sup>

Minutes of Victorian Bookbinders' Committee Meetings, 2 October 1917,

<sup>3</sup>

Walker, 'Unemployment in Australia', table 34.

<sup>4</sup>

Only six members of the V.T.S. failed to come out, and only one went back in (V.T.S. Board of Management Minutes, 31 July 1920). Only four Bookbinders offended (Minutes of Special and General Meetings of the Victorian Bookbinders, 25 May 1920).

explanation: the strike took place at a time when normal seasonal fluctuation made success unlikely,<sup>1</sup> and it continued long after it was apparent that it was achieving nothing.

In July 1919, just two months before the Federal Council of the P.I.E.U.A. was due to arrive in Melbourne and begin organizing in an attempt to establish its Victorian Branch, the Board of the V.T.S. resolved to inaugurate a campaign among the printing trades for the forty-four hour week. If it had succeeded, the V.T.S. could have claimed to have achieved something that neither the P.I.E.U.A. nor any of its branches had been able to do. Its leadership of the Victorian printing unions would have been assured, and it could have been confident of attracting them away from the P.I.E.U.A.

But the plan misfired. The Master Printers' Association made it plain that it would make no compromise.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the year, the P.I.E.U.A. had made uncomfortable progress with the Cardboard Box Employees Union and the Bookbinders. In January the Wages Board declared that it would yield nothing in the reduction of hours. This put on trial the assertion of the V.T.S. that its policy of direct action could achieve more than the arbitration of the P.I.E.U.A. It had to make its throw, or face the taunt that there was no reason for its independence because its policy and the P.I.E.U.A.'s were the same. But the dice were loaded against it. After eleven weeks the men went back to work on the slightly higher rates the

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Jobbing offices were usually slackest in the first and second quarters of the year. Employers were normally most sensitive to strike pressure as they prepared for the Christmas rush.

2

V.T.S. Board of Management Minutes, 18 October 1919.

M.P.A. had offered in the first few days, and there was no reduction in hours.<sup>1</sup>

The strike's failure precipitated the Bookbinders into the P.I.E.U.A. Their Victorian Branch ran out of strike pay after a fortnight, and it borrowed so heavily that by June it owed over £2,500.<sup>2</sup> By then it had instructed its delegates to the Federal body to urge a ballot of all members on joining the P.I.E.U.A. The result of the ballot showed that all States except New South Wales were in favour,<sup>3</sup> and on 7 September 1920 the Bookbinders held their first meeting as a Board of Management of the Victorian Branch P.I.E.U.A.<sup>4</sup> By agreement between the two parties, the P.I.E.U.A. took over £1,514 of the Victorian Bookbinders' debts.<sup>5</sup> It guaranteed Bookbinders a separate representative on its Federal Council, and gave them the right of withdrawal after three years.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

V.T.S. Minutes of General Meeting, 16 May 1920. The meeting voted to accept the Committee's recommendation to call off the strike by 607:251. The M.P.A. offered £4.16s. for the hand compositor, with proportionate rises for others. They agreed to 'facilitate a reference' of the hours question to the general inquiry contemplated by Mr Justice Higgins.

<sup>2</sup>Minutes of Special and General Meetings of the Victorian Bookbinders, 22 June 1920.

<sup>3</sup>Result of the ballot was

	Vic.	N.S.W.	Q.	S.A.	W.A.
For	209	84	26	62	18
Against	17	121	11	7	3

Source: P.T.J., vol.IV, no.8, 1920, p.181.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of Committee Meetings of Victorian Bookbinders, 7 September 1920.

<sup>5</sup>Minutes of Council Meetings of P.I.E.U.A., September 1921, vol.II, pp.182-3 and P.T.J., vol.VIII, no.12, December 1924, p.236.

<sup>6</sup>Minutes of Special and General Meetings of Victorian Bookbinders, 11 May 1920, record a draft agreement. Minutes of P.I.E.U.A. Council meetings attest that it was fulfilled.

Of the other Victorian printing unions, the Lithographers had put themselves beyond the pale by accepting the terms offered by the Master Printers early in the strike and returning to work.<sup>1</sup> The Printers' Operatives' Union, with few members involved, had lost little by the strike and made it plain that they were not interested in any union so deeply committed to Federal arbitration as the P.I.E.U.A.<sup>2</sup> The Cardboard Box Employees Union voted for amalgamation, but found that the P.I.E.U.A.'s price for admission was now higher than in 1919 - there was to be no special representative on Council for them.<sup>3</sup> They agreed to join up just the same, and with even less enthusiasm so did the Women Bookbinders and Stationery Employees.<sup>4</sup> Their doubts resulted largely from the failure of the V.T.S. to show its hand.

The V.T.S. had suffered badly in the strike. At 31 December 1919, its assets had been nearly £18,000. Six months later, they were £14,000 less, and the Society owed £1,000 as well.<sup>5</sup> Direct action had been costly and futile, but the isolationists still held a majority on the Board. When the Board in September received another invitation to join P.I.E.U.A., it agreed to put the proposal for negotiation to a ballot of its members but

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1

V.T.S. Board of Management Minutes, 29 February and 20 March 1920.

2

Minutes of P.I.E.U.A. Council Meeting, October 1920, vol.II, p.145.

3

P.T.J., vol.IV, no.10, October 1920, p.236 and Minutes of P.I.E.U.A. Council Meetings, October 1920, vol.II p.161.

4

Ibid., no.9, September 1920, p.203.

5

V.T.S. Balance Sheets, 31 December 1919 and 30 June 1920.

advised them to vote 'No!'.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, the members instructed the Board to negotiate.<sup>2</sup> The result was a draft agreement which expressly excluded the Victorian Branch from any plaint in the Federal Arbitration Court unless its members decided that they wished to be joined to it.<sup>3</sup> Even this was not good enough for the old opponents of the Federal Court. At the Board meeting of 30 October, Sanderson and Vinnard, two of the men who had led the Society out of the A.T.U. in 1913, moved that in the forthcoming ballot the Executive recommend that members reject the draft agreement. They urged, among other things, 'That no provision exists under (the P.I.E.U.A.'s) rules for financial assistance from the Federation as a whole to any branch in event of industrial trouble.' After its rebuff at the last ballot, the Board decided to put the agreement to members without comment. The members endorsed it by a majority of two to one.<sup>4</sup> Within a month, the Ballarat Typographical Society had voted unanimously for amalgamation,<sup>5</sup> and from 1 July 1921 the Victorian Branch P.I.E.U.A. assumed virtually its present form.

#### The Foundation of the Amalgamated Printing Trade Employees' Union

In Melbourne, it took the failure of the largest strike in the printing industry that the city has ever known to bring the reluctant unions into amalgamation with

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1

V.T.S. Board of Management Minutes, 31 July 1920.

2

P.T.J., vol.IV, no.10, October 1920, p.236. 445 votes for, 385 votes against.

3

V.T.S. Board of Management Minutes, 30 October 1920.

4

P.T.J., vol.V, no.5, May 1921, p.81. 624 votes for, 341 against.

5

Ibid., no.6, June 1921, p.121.

the P.I.E.U.A. In Sydney, there was no such inducement. The group of unions who sent delegates to the Printing Trades Federation Council - the Letterpress Machinists Union, the Bookbinders, the Lithographers and the Process Engravers - resisted all the blandishments of the N.S.W. Branch P.I.E.U.A., and remained stubbornly independent of the One Big Union of Printers.

By 1920, these unions had developed a political tradition and outlook completely different from the N.S.W. Branch. Where the N.S.W. Branch had achieved only stalemate on the Conscription issue, the other Unions had each endorsed the P.T.F.C.'s anti-Conscription policy, and constituent unions had voted large sums to the anti-conscription campaigns with only a few dissentients.<sup>1</sup> While the N.S.W. Branch argued over what it could with safety do for the men who went out in the General Strike of 1917 and compromised on a voluntary levy, the Letterpress Machinists Union voted £250 (with one dissenting vote),<sup>2</sup> and the Bookbinders voted £400.<sup>3</sup> When the Executive of the N.S.W. Branch had to resign to force a loan to their fellow craftsmen on strike in Melbourne,<sup>4</sup> the P.T.F.C. guaranteed £500 instantly.<sup>5</sup>

The temperamental difference had been apparent well before the war. The N.S.W.T.A. wanted to protect its system

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1

On the policy of the constituent unions towards the Second Conscription Referendum, see P.T.F.C. Minutes, 19 June 1917, and Minutes of the L.M.U., 12 December 1917.

2

Minutes of the L.M.U., 10 September 1917.

3

Minutes of the P.T.F.C., 18 September 1917.

4

Minutes of N.S.W. Branch P.I.E.U.A., 11 and 17 April 1920.

5

Minutes of the P.T.F.C., 20 April 1920.

of awards and feared involvement in strikes; the Letterpress Machinists Union was far more inclined to leave arbitration with direct action. After the war began, the language of some of its most influential members began to make increasing use of I.W.W. phrase and slogan. Their class analysis of society was well received by most members, who seemed to agree that the best industrial method was 'to strike in the shop and make the boss pay'.<sup>1</sup> At his election at the end of the war, Tom Bell looked forward to the co-operation of members in making the L.M.U. 'a progressive and militant body of craftsmen'.<sup>2</sup>

This preference for militants and for militancy did not however mean that the L.M.U. favoured the ideal of the One Big Union any more than the N.S.W. Branch P.I.E.U.A. Requests from the O.B.U. Committee were perpetually deferred, and never acted on.<sup>3</sup> The main effect of the O.B.U. propaganda was to help push the P.T.F.C. unions into a firmer amalgamation of their own. They were militant, but they were craftsmen.

They were also craftsmen who wished to remain independent of the P.I.E.U.A. The P.T.F.C.'s first serious discussion of amalgamation began about the time the old N.S.W.T.A. became the N.S.W. Branch.<sup>4</sup> The N.S.W. Branch made several offers of amalgamation, but the unions of the P.T.F.C. could never forget the Simmons strike.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., n.d., p.73.

<sup>2</sup>

Minutes of L.M.U., 11 November 1918.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., 15 September 1919.

<sup>4</sup>

Minutes of P.T.F.C., 16 October 1917.

<sup>5</sup>

Ibid., 13 May and 15 July 1919; 16 March 1920.

As the N.S.W. Branch began to expand, so they drew closer together. In September 1919, each of the P.T.F.C. unions carried a ballot for amalgamation among themselves by a majority of four to one. The process was hurried to its conclusion by the national ballot of Bookbinders which committed them to membership with the P.I.E.U.A. The N.S.W. Bookbinders Union had voted heavily against the proposal; it seceded from the Federation, and the P.T.F.C. completed its registration in two months. From September 1920, the group of unions that had made up the P.T.F.C. merged in a new body known as the Amalgamated Printing Trades Employees' Union.

#### The Power Structure of the P.I.E.U.A.

With the amalgamation of the Victorian unions, the P.I.E.U.A. had virtually reached the limits of its coverage.<sup>1</sup> Protracted negotiations with the Australian Journalists' Association produced no more than loose agreements for mutual consultation.<sup>2</sup> In most States, well-established unions catered for the engineers, electricians, motor drivers and others employed in the printing industry.<sup>3</sup>

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1

Pulp and paper workers have been the only significant addition to Union membership since 1920.

2

See Minutes of Meetings of P.I.E.U.A. Federal Council for May 1916, p.17, September 1916, p.31, November 1917, p.66, September 1918, p.82b, October 1918, p.104, September 1919, pp.115-7, September 1921, pp.173-4, September 1921, p.186, and November 1924, p.304.

3

From September 1921, Union rules admitted '...all persons who are or have been bona fide employees in the Printing or any kindred industry or any section thereof...' The only Branch that seems to have covered any group that might conceivably have belonged to other unions was South Australia, which formed an Advisory Committee for Clerks.



The P.I.E.U.A. therefore came close to, but did not quite achieve, the 'One Industry, One Union' ideal endorsed by Trade Halls authorities who opposed the industrial principle of the One Big Union. With the theories propounded by either that body or the factions of the I.W.W., the constitution of the enlarged P.I.E.U.A. had little to do. Despite the vague hopes that the Printing Trades Journal had expressed for the control of industry by those who worked in it, the principles of Branch government remained virtually the same as those of the old typographical societies.

The branches were the units of the Union's organization, and the newly-amalgamated sections were fitted into their structure through the establishment of advisory committees on the precedent set by the old N.S.W. Typographical Association when it first arranged for the membership of Linotype operators. The advisory committees had to notify the Branch Executive of their intended meetings, and the rules of most State branches required the presence of an executive officer at advisory committee meetings. In any case, the committees could do no more than give advice to the Board of Management of the Branch.

Arrangements for the representation of the advisory committees on the Board of Management varied slightly from Branch to Branch. The largest single representation was in the N.S.W. Branch, where Rule 27 provided for six representatives of the Women and Girls Advisory Committee on the Board. Other advisory committees of the N.S.W. Branch elected two members each. The rules of the other branches permitted up to three representatives from each advisory committee. But in each of the branches by far the greatest number of representatives came not from the advisory committees, but from the representatives of the

various printing offices.<sup>1</sup> Once again, the rules varied, but in practice they meant that any shop larger than a 'back-yarder' would be entitled to one representative, and the biggest of them would be unlikely to have more than four.<sup>2</sup>

Sections of craftsmen within the printing industry were not represented proportionately to their numbers; theoretically, their particular craft interests could find expression at the Board. But the Board remained dominated by the group that had made the societies before the amalgamations began. Since compositors remained the most numerous craft group in most printing shops they could dominate the election of shop representatives, and in practice continued to dominate the boards of management

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1

When the N.S.W.T.A. changed its name in 1917 to the N.S.W. Branch P.I.E.U.A., it had to transfer its old membership to the new Union. Detailed lists of members with place of occupation were written into the Minutes, and as a result it is possible to make a detailed analysis of the composition of the Board for that year. Of its 60 members, 30 were office representatives, 12 represented advisory committees, and seven were executive officers. There were four trade representatives (elected by the whole membership except the women and girls), and the remaining seven were ex-officio members of special committees which had been similarly elected. Of the 60, at least 48 worked or had worked in the composing room. This balance was scarcely changed with the admission of the Cardboard Box Employees, who were entitled to a maximum of two representatives on the Board.

2

The Queensland, Western Australian, and South Australian rules set a limit of three. The Victorian Rules set a limit of four. New South Wales set no limit, but after the first representative, allowed only one for every hundred financial male members.

of the State branches.<sup>1</sup> Within the compositor group, the newspapermen had a special organizational advantage because of their centralization.

Compositors had the same kind of advantages in Federal representation. The rules of the Union provided that each branch was entitled to send to Council one representative and additional representatives if it had over 1,500 members.<sup>2</sup> These representatives were elected by the whole of the membership. The Women and Girls, the Bookbinders, and the Cardboard Box Employees had all sought sectional representation on Federal Council<sup>3</sup> but Council refused to depart from the requirement that the Branch Councillor represent the whole of his membership. Again the compositor as the largest single occupational group, could dominate Federal Council elections, and in practice compositors formed the majority of Council members in the first few years.<sup>4</sup> The same reasoning applies to the democratic provisions in the Union Rules which permitted reference of Council decision to referendum, and the calling of special conferences.<sup>5</sup>

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1

In New South Wales, the dominance of male compositors was further protected by Rule 69(2), which prohibited women and girls from voting in the election of office representatives.

2

New South Wales and Victoria were therefore the only branches entitled to two representatives on Council.

3

The Cardboard Box Employees had been refused outright; the Bookbinders had temporary representation as a condition of amalgamation; and the Women and Girls had a temporary representative who had no right to vote.

4

Of the 28 P.I.E.U.A. Councillors between 1920 and 1925, 18 were compositors.

5

Rules 4 and 47, Union Rule Book, 1921.

The control of One Big Union of Printers was therefore in much the same hands as that of the smaller typographical unions that had made up the old A.T.U. Theoretically, at least, there was a far greater change in policy. Whereas the old A.T.U. owed its origin in the 1880s partly to its potential for enhancing the power of the strike, the P.I.E.U.A. was a union committed to arbitration in the Federal Court.

Not that the P.I.E.U.A. was incapable of giving some assistance to an individual Branch whose members were on strike. It could not, of course, raise funds for an interstate dispute because of its registration under the Federal Arbitration Act. But nothing in Rule 21 prevented the allotment of the Accumulated Reserve Fund for strike purposes, and Rule 18 provided for the raising of a levy 'Should any extraordinary expenditure become necessary'. Such a levy however required 'the sanction of the Boards of Management of at least three branches'. As the 1920 Strike had demonstrated, there was nothing automatic about such sanction, and the wording of Union Rule 3 provided reticent Board members with grounds for quibbling.<sup>1</sup> The general structure of the Union suited conciliation and arbitration far better than direct action.

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The difficulty here was with the second object, which provided for the settlement of differences between members and employers 'by just and equitable methods'. Was a strike just and equitable if arbitration processes were available? A member with an interest in the matter might well have made considerable difficulty for the Union in a State or Federal arbitration court. In any case, the Union would have had little chance of getting an order against members who refused to pay a strike levy.

The One Big Union of Printers carried the impress of the old N.S.W. Typographical Association. Its creation had been partly the continuance of settled policy, partly the need to establish unity in a Branch badly torn by political dispute. Its form reflected the isolation of the N.S.W. Branch from the Trades and Labour Council, and the desire of its Executive to hold down militancy by arbitration procedure. It was the N.S.W. Typographical Association that had first wholeheartedly accepted arbitration procedure for its members in Sydney; its successor had managed to impose it on all but a few segments of a national industry. A union whose object had been the re-establishment of privileges by whatever means necessary had become one committed to their maintenance by arbitration procedures in the Federal Court.

But it was one thing to sketch a union's form on paper, and another to have it act according to its image. The policy of establishing One Big Union of Printers had succeeded because it had some appeal both for those who believed in cleaving to a policy of Federal Arbitration, and for those who considered some independent action necessary. This ambiguity expressed itself in the four years after the establishment of the Victorian Branch, when the Union supported strikes while it made simultaneous applications for an Award of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BASIS OF STABILITY

Between 1916 and 1924, each State Branch of the P.I.E.U.A., at some time or another did not want the Union to go ahead with filing a claim in the Federal Court. For half of these eight years, the Union itself was without purpose, and at times near dissolution. When at last the Council of the P.I.E.U.A. did agree on the submission of a Federal plaint, the Western Australian and Queensland Branches abstained from it, and elected to follow their own individual and highly profitable paths. The Union had to threaten the Tasmanian Branch with dissolution before it would agree to the claims; ironically, it was the greatest beneficiary of the two Federal Agreements that the P.I.E.U.A. secured.

The Branches and the Federal Plaint, 1916-20

In 1913, when the Council of the old A.T.U. had put the issue of registration with the Federal Arbitration Court to the ballot, members had anticipated that a Federal Printing Award would follow soon after registration. Yet by 1920, four years after registration, the Union was still without one. Three times Council drew up logs of claims, and three times it abandoned them.

Part of the Union's reluctance to proceed followed from the continued refusal of the Victorian Typographical Society to amalgamate, but this alone is quite insufficient to explain its lack of action. From the day of Federal registration the S.A. Branch was consistent in wishing to push ahead with a Federal plaint. Its great trouble was to induce the other Branches to join it. There was a

technical difficulty in timing the Federal case, because State authorities generally took little notice of claims put before them by a union which had a claim in the Federal Court. There was a political difficulty, in that State courts and wages boards began (from the point of view of the printing unions) to perform far better within a few years of the P.I.E.U.A.'s federal registration.

The Branch most notably unenthusiastic about a Federal Award in these years was Queensland. Here the Labor Party had won the 1915 elections and the incoming Government had early repealed the Industrial Peace Act of 1912. In its place they put an Industrial Arbitration Act which set up an arbitration court, under the control 'of a "sympathetic" President.'<sup>1</sup> Alone of the State Labor parties, the Queensland Labor Government managed to avoid any serious disruption over the conscription issue, and for several years organized labour remained 'on friendly terms, very friendly terms, with the Government.'<sup>2</sup> By the last quarter of 1919, average hourly wages in Queensland were the highest in Australia, although only four years earlier, they had been the second lowest.<sup>3</sup>

An abnormally low rate of unemployment helped the Queensland Branch to reap substantial benefit from a benign Court. In the last quarter of 1917, unemployment in the Queensland printing industry fell below one per

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1

E.M. Higgins, 'The Queensland Labor Governments, 1915-29', unpublished M.A. thesis, Melbourne University, 1954, p.61.

2

The Queensland Worker, quoted by Higgins, ibid., p.59.

3

The Commonwealth Statistician, quoted by Higgins, ibid., p.59.

cent, remained below that figure for the whole of 1918, and rose above it only twice in the next two years.<sup>1</sup> Despite a steady inflation, wages never lagged more than a couple of shillings behind their pre-war value,<sup>2</sup>

The wages boards and the Court also made other very important concessions, in both the jobbing and newspaper sections of the industry. In 1919, the Brisbane Wages Board granted a Metropolitan Award which incorporated all previous benefits, and added two others. First, it ordered the payment of a weekly wage, which compelled payment for public holidays, and made possible the provision of sick pay; second, it reduced the hours of

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1

Walker, 'Unemployment in Australia', Table 24.

2

Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial), Brisbane, 1913-1920, related to the Commonwealth Statistician's Retail Price Index Numbers, Food, Groceries and Rent (all houses), 1911 = 1000 (Six capitals weighted average).

	<u>Money Wage</u> <u>(shillings)</u>	<u>Index</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>1913 Wage</u> <u>Adjusted</u> <u>to Index</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Difference</u> <u>(shillings)</u>
December 1913	56	976		
April 1914	64	990	56.8	+ 7.2
August 1914	60	1005	60.0	0
December 1915	60	1255	72.0	- 12.0
November 1916	68	1140	65.4	+ 3.6
December 1917	68	1225	70.3	- 2.3
May 1918	72	1237	71.0	+ 1.0
December 1918	72	1301	74.6	- 2.6
September 1919	76	1423	81.6	- 5.6
December 1919	76	1543	88.5	- 12.5
May 1920	95	1652	94.8	+ 0.2

Dates other than December dates are those of the decision by Board or Court.



work to 45½ a week.<sup>1</sup> These features then found their place in the determinations of the wages boards in other divisions of the State.<sup>2</sup>

The Brisbane Board also made determinations affecting the metropolitan dailies which went a good distance towards 'levelling-up' their conditions to those established in Sydney and Melbourne. In 1918, it granted a higher rate for night work, prohibited apprenticeship to newspaper work alone, and severely restricted the amount of time an apprentice could spend working a Linotype machine.<sup>3</sup> A year later, it awarded a week's paid annual holiday.<sup>4</sup> Although the Court refused to grant preference to members of the Q.T.A., its judgments made it clear that it would if the proprietors of the dailies continued to discriminate against them. As a result, the numbers of Q.T.A. members at the Courier and Telegraph increased until both were virtually closed shops by mid-1920.<sup>5</sup>

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1

N.S.W. Branch Minutes of General Meetings, 23 August 1919.

2

The Northern Board did even better, and granted 44 hours in the same month. Queensland Branch Board Minutes, 11 October 1919.

3

P.T.J., vol.II, no.5, 1918, p.101.

4

Ibid., vol.III, no.6, 1919, p.152.

5

See Queensland Branch General Minutes 15 July 1920 and Board Minutes 13 September 1920. Some of the Melbourne and Sydney dailies had by this time been closed shops for the best part of half a century. Their employees had been enjoying paid annual leave for at least ten years, and their restrictions on apprentices and their operation of slug-casting machinery were more rigorous than those provided by the Brisbane Award.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that Board and General Meetings of the Queensland Branch resolved not to be a party to the Federal logs of 1918 and 1919, nor is it wise to take their published reasons for abstention too literally.<sup>1</sup> Four years of Labor government, labour scarcity, and industrial success had been more than enough to change the eager advocates of federalism into barely benevolent neutrals.

The Western Australian Branch had less distance to travel in deciding on its opposition. As the W.A.T.I.U. it had never been very enthusiastic about a Federal Award, but as late as mid-1917 it was prepared to continue negotiations with the Master Printers' Association only for the purpose of attaining 'A temporary agreement until we could reach the Federal Court.'<sup>2</sup> A year and a half later, the Board recommended members 'that the Branch be not a party' to Federal proceedings.<sup>3</sup>, and when the Federal Secretary urged that the Executive at least hold a special meeting to induce members of the jobbing section to join the plaint, President Bourne told a meeting of all members that

it would be futile to convene a special meeting re jobbing section to deal with the plaint as it was a foregone conclusion that they would vote against going to the Federal Court while there was a prospect of getting better conditions and shorter hours in the State Court.

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The official reasons given by the Queensland Branch for abstaining from the Federal logs were that they were sectional, that is, they did not provide for all sections of the industry. But the P.I.E.U.A. was probably reluctant to do other for fear of offending those unions like the Bookbinders whom it hoped to persuade to join it.

2

W.A. Branch Minutes, 12 May 1917.

3

Ibid., 6 February 1919.

The meeting resolved that the Branch be not a party to the Federal plaint,<sup>1</sup> and the Board decided not to bother to send a delegate to the next meeting of Council.<sup>2</sup>

The general expectation that the State Court and the Master Printers Association would make it worth the Branch's while to stay away from the Federal Court was based on their performance over the past few years. There had been only a very gentle inflation during the war years in Perth, and unemployment had been slight.<sup>3</sup> The W.A. Branch did not even bother to press for an adjustment of 1913 wage levels until 1917, when the Court restored the hand compositor's minimum wage almost to within a shilling of its pre-war value.<sup>4</sup> But by this time, the decision was

<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., 10 July 1919.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 2 August 1919.

<sup>3</sup>

It varied between 3.9 and 0.8 per cent in the sixteen quarters 1917-20. Walker, 'Unemployment in Australia', Table 24.

<sup>4</sup>

Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial), Perth, 1913-20, related to the Commonwealth Statistician's Retail Price Index Numbers.

		<u>Money Wage</u> ( <u>shillings</u> )	<u>Index</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>1913 Wage</u> <u>Adjusted</u> <u>to index</u> <u>number</u>	<u>Difference</u> ( <u>shillings</u> )
December	1913	65	1123		
December	1916	65	1252	72.5	- 7.5
August	1917	70	1234	71.4	- 1.4
December	1918	70	1223	70.8	- 0.8
September	1919	70	1502	86.9	- 16.9
November	1919	82.5	1436	83.1	- 0.6
December	1920	82.5	1618	93.6	- 11.1

Months other than December are those in which wage decisions were made.

irrelevant, since 'the majority (of employers) paid above the minimum, and pay 80 to 85 shillings under the new award.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly, another decision of December 1918 again restoring the 1913 value of the hand compositor's wage had little real effect.

Rapid inflation first affected Perth in 1919. By the third quarter, its Retail Price Index number was almost 25 per cent higher than it had been in the first quarter, and the hand compositor's minimum was almost seventeen shillings behind its 1913 equivalent.<sup>2</sup> The Half-Yearly General Meeting of the Branch empowered the Executive to call a stop-work meeting in protest against the inflation, and endorsed the resolution of the N.S.W., Printing Trades Federation Council for a forty-hour week.<sup>3</sup> The inflation, the successful strike of the Lumpers, the shooting of Tom Edwards on the wharves at Fremantle, and the activities of the Industrial Workers of the World had all combined to put the Perth labour movement in the most militant mood it had ever known.<sup>4</sup> This was not without its

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<sup>1</sup>P.T.J., vol.1, no.9, September 1917, p.19.

<sup>2</sup>See footnote 4, p.380

<sup>3</sup>W.A. Branch Minutes, 9 August 1919.

<sup>4</sup>The events of April-May on the Fremantle Waterfront are reported in the P.T.J., for June 1919 by F.M. Kelsall of the W.A. Branch under the heading 'Westralia's Eureka'. This article's version is that violence broke out when 'scab' wharf labourers attempted to unload a ship which the Lumpers' Union declared had not been properly quarantined. Premier Colebatch at first declared for the unionists, but because his Government was 'in the grip of the Employers' Federation' led a police intervention to assist the loyalists in their work. The Harbour Trust employees refused 'to do the dirty work of Capitalism' and did not erect barricades to keep the crowd from the wharves; when the Premier and his party arrived by launch, they were stoned. The police charged the crowd, and Tom Edwards was shot dead. The Government subsequently paid compensation to his widow, and 'retired' the loyalists from the wharf.

effect on the W.A. Branch. Besides an increased willingness to deal with the labour movement at large, the Branch broke away from the amiable collusion it had established with the employers in the pre-war period.

In August, it decided to seek a 44 hour week and an increase of the hand compositor's minimum wage of £4.10s.<sup>1</sup> The Master Printers' Association would offer no more than £3.15s. for 48 hours, and late in October broke off negotiations.<sup>2</sup> It was not possible to get the case before the Arbitration Court until the following March, and this was not good enough for the Branch. On 8 November, it resolved to increase its claim to £5 for 44 hours, ban overtime, and refer the matter to private arbitration. Unless the masters agreed to this reference on the Branch's terms, 'the rates and conditions as set out in the schedule would operate from the 17 November'.<sup>3</sup>

The M.P.A. agreed to refer the matter to private arbitration. Mr Canning, P.M., acted as Chairman, and in a week he gave his decision. Employers were to pay a weekly wage, and grant one week's holiday on full pay each year. They were to pay £4.2s.6d. for 44 hours work, but had the right to work their employees an extra four hours at the same rate.<sup>4</sup> Only a very few employers attempted to take advantage of the four extra hours, and Mr Canning in effect gave a decision which meant the introduction of the forty-four hour week into the Australian commercial

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1

W.A. Branch Minutes, 25 August 1919.

2

W.A. Branch, A Record in Arbitration, Perth, 1920, p.5.

3

W.A. Branch Minutes, 8 November 1919.

4

W.A. Branch, A Record in Arbitration, p.8.

printing industry.<sup>1</sup>

Far from being able to record such a brilliant success, the South Australian Branch could not even claim to have held its own, and seemed to have little prospect of improving its position. Wages had not kept up with inflation in Adelaide quite as well as they had in Perth.<sup>2</sup> The Adelaide hand compositor's wage - which in 1913 was in real terms lower than that paid in Perth - dropped behind further still.<sup>3</sup> Workers on the metropolitan morning dailies complained that they alone in the newspaper industry were still required to work 48 hours at night. All South

1

Considerations of climate had influenced the award of 44 hours by the North Queensland Board noted earlier. It formed no precedent for the rest of the industry.

2

Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial), Adelaide, 1914-20, related to the Commonwealth Statistician's Retail Price Index Numbers.

		<u>Money Wage</u> <u>(shillings)</u>	<u>Index</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>1914 Wage</u> <u>Adjusted</u> <u>to Index</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>Difference</u> <u>(shillings)</u>
September	1914	60	1156		
December	1915	60	1282	66.5	- 6.5
June	1916	65	1309	68.0	- 3.0
December	1916	65	1257	65.2	- 0.2
October	1917	68	1242	64.5	+ 3.5
September	1918	68	1332	69.1	- 1.1
November	1918	72	1349	70.0	+ 2.0
December	1919	72	1531	79.5	- 7.5
January	1920	76.5	1585	82.3	- 5.8
July	1920	93	1868	97.0	- 4.0

Months other than December are months in which wage decision were made.

3

		<u>Adelaide</u>		<u>Perth</u>		<u>Adelaide</u>
		<u>Money</u> <u>Wage</u>	<u>Index</u> <u>Figure</u>	<u>Money</u> <u>Wage</u>	<u>Index</u> <u>Figure</u>	<u>Equivalent</u>
December	1913	60	1092	65	1123	61.7
August	1918	68	1332	70	1230	62.8
December	1918	72	1349	70	1223	65.3

Australian unions resented the Industrial Disputes Act of 1912, and when the Vaughan Labor Ministry was defeated after the conscription split there was no longer any reason to hope for any of those concessions that Labor governments might be expected to make towards their trade unionist electors.

A transfer to the Federal Court therefore began to appear even more desirable than it had in 1913, when South Australian members had decided for registration by a five to one majority. Besides representing an escape to legislation that the Labor Party had some hope of controlling, it meant an appeal to the liberality of Mr Justice Higgins rather than to the parsimony of Dr Jethro Brown.

Ever since Mr. Justice Higgins had made his famous 'Harvester' Judgment' in 1907, arbitration courts in Australia had concerned themselves increasingly with the 'minimum', 'living', or 'basic' wage. This was, as His Honor explained it, the amount needed to maintain a man, his wife and three children, regarded as human beings living in a civilized community, and it amounted in Melbourne in 1907 to seven shillings a day. With the coming of war and inflation, judges of State arbitration courts were inclined to award something less than the 'Harvester equivalent' as a minimum wage. Since the same judges also came to think of wages paid to those who earned more than the minimum as being composed of the minimum wage plus a margin, a depression of the declared minimum wage would adversely affect the wages of skilled workers as well as labourers. For humanitarian reasons and others as well, the South Australian Branch was concerned when Dr Jethro Brown, President of the South Australian Industrial Court, showed a marked reluctance to increase the minimum wage in war time.

On the other hand, Mr Justice Higgins was prepared to raise his 'basic' wage largely in accordance with the Retail Price Index Numbers calculated by the Commonwealth Statistician.<sup>1</sup> Thus in 1916, when Dr Brown was awarding 48s. and (after September) 54s. to the labourer, Mr Justice Higgins was awarding 60s., and there was no change in this ratio until the end of 1918.<sup>2</sup>

Justice Higgins' offer to raise the basic wage automatically was also attractive in New South Wales, where Mr Justice Heydon had not kept his minimum wage up to the 'Harvester equivalent', and had adopted a device for depressing margins as well.<sup>3</sup> By mid-1917, his minimum wage was about eight shillings below its Federal equivalent, and 'Eighteen Point' commented in the P.T.J. :

Mr. Justice Heydon, after several painful efforts, has managed to get the living wage minimum up to £2.15s.6d. per week. This was bad enough, as it did not nearly meet the increased cost of living; but on application from the employers, he introduced an ingenious 'diminishing' idea on wages above the inadequate minimum, which whittled away a big lump of even that small increase. By contrast, Mr Justice Higgins, in the Federal Court, has fixed the minimum at £3.3s. per week, without that funny little notion of "diminishing" ... Taking the minimum for unskilled labor as fixed by Mr Justice Higgins, it is difficult to see how the Commonwealth Court could avoid awarding a wage substantially in advance of present rates for such highly skilled work as that of the hand compositor.<sup>4</sup>

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1

W. Angliss and Others v. Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union, X, Commonwealth Arbitration Reports, pp.479-80.

2

Ibid.

3

See chapter Seven, p.335, and pp.342-3

4

P.T.J., vol.I, no.6, June 1919.



This good argument became even better two years later, when Mr Justice Heydon's principle of diminishing margins had elapsed, but the Court refused to adjust the Compositors' Award, even though it provided for a wage which by the third quarter of the year was actually lower than the declared minimum.<sup>1</sup> This total suspension of the compositor's margin in peace time made the position of the N.S.W. Branch Executive as loyal supporters of arbitration almost untenable. It decided to get a Federal Award, and get it quickly. On 23 August the Board of Management approved the dispatch to the Union's Federal Council of motions which resulted in the P.I.E.U.A. making its first concerted effort at securing a Federal Award.

The N.S.W. motions raised the question of where power lay in the Union, and, by implication, the question of the Union's very existence. Council was to frame a log; Branches were to indicate their acceptance of the outlines of the Log within six weeks. Failing this,

the Council's Executive shall be authorized to take such steps as it deems necessary to secure a unanimous decision before 31 January, 1920, and that failing such a decision being reached the Union's Executive shall be empowered to distribute the funds of the Union upon a per capita basis, and to otherwise wind-up its affairs before the 31st March, 1920.<sup>2</sup>

Once this threat had forced the adoption of the outlines of the Log, Branches were to be closely

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In October, the Board of Trade declared 77 shillings as the minimum weekly wage. The hand compositor's wage was then 73s.6d.

2

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 23 August 1919.

regulated to accept its particulars. When Council had decided on the exact terms of the Log, Branch Boards of Management were bound to advocate their acceptance by members; and if the membership still refused, then the Branch was to be fined per capita.

Council debated and adopted the N.S.W. Branch's motions on 26 September.<sup>1</sup> That they were accepted with comparative ease was due largely to the advice of Mr Rundle, the Union's solicitor, who held that the Federal Court now dealt with complaints far more quickly than in the past, thereby minimizing the possible loss of State Awards. There was also, he claimed, a good prospect of reduced hours, and retrospective pay. Within a month, the Prime Minister himself lent a hand in making the Federal Court more attractive. At his policy speech in Bendigo he committed himself to appointing a Commission to enquire into the adequacy of the Basic Wage and recommended possible ways of adjusting wages to keep pace with the cost of living.

All the Branches accepted the Federal Log, both in outline and in detail. South Australia, particularly resentful of the latest Wages Board Determination, adopted the Federal Log as an alternative to strike action.<sup>2</sup> Western Australia, inclined previously to hold aloof, accepted the arguments of Mr. Rundle as put by its Council delegate, and decided unanimously to be a party to the plaint.<sup>3</sup> Queensland wavered, but finally adopted the Log by a narrow margin.<sup>4</sup> The Branch that destroyed the

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of P.I.E.U.A., Council, 26 September 1919.

<sup>2</sup>S.A. Branch Minutes, 31 January 1920.

<sup>3</sup>W.A. Branch Minutes, 22 November 1919.

<sup>4</sup>

By 17 votes to 15, in a division from which there were many abstentions. Queensland Branch Minutes of General Meetings, 27 February 1920.

whole plan was the Branch that had made it.

In little more than a month after the N.S.W. Branch had committed itself to putting the existence of the Union on trial, the N.S.W. Board of Trade announced an increase of 17 shillings in the State living wage, and at one stroke swept away the Branch's main objection to remaining within the jurisdiction of the State industrial system.<sup>1</sup> At 14 February, the Branch was still, though somewhat reluctantly, prepared to go ahead.<sup>2</sup> By 13 March, the S.A. Branch had received a telegram advising them that the N.S.W. Branch wanted to delay lodging the Federal claim,<sup>3</sup> and after that, there is no further discussion of the 1919-20 Log.

No meeting of the N.S.W. Branch authorized the dropping of the Federal claim; the decision was made by the Executive. The Minutes recorded no reasons for their action, but it seems very likely that they had speculated on the result of the State election to be held on 20 March. Their guess proved right. The Nationalists lost, Labor won, and in a year's time, N.S.W. Branch members were working a forty-four hour week that was guaranteed by State law.<sup>4</sup>

Thus ended the first serious attempt to obtain a Federal Award.

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1

The Board announced its decision on the 17 October. The hand compositor's award wage had actually dropped below this minimum.

2

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 14 February 1920.

3

S.A. Branch Minutes, 13 March 1920.

4

The 44 hour week for the printing industry was proclaimed on 1 May 1921.

### The Western Australian Branch

The defection of the N.S.W. Branch set back the movement for a Federal Award considerably, but did not prevent the other Branches from going to Court themselves. What did this was a combination of changes in Federal Arbitrationlaw, adverse decisions by the Court, rising unemployment in industry generally, and continued prosperity in the printing industry throughout Australia.

When Mr Justice Higgins was hearing a claim by the Timber Workers in April 1920, he issued what amounted to an invitation to unions generally to put a case for the reduction of standard hours from 48 to 44.<sup>1</sup> Only a few months after, Prime Minister Hughes succeeded in having Parliament pass certain amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Some of these seriously perturbed trade unionists by extending the definition of a strike, but others worried them still more. As amended, the Act required that any decision to vary standard working hours had to be made by three judges sitting together. The two judges to be added to the Arbitration Court did not need to be members of the existing High Court bench, so that the Nationalist Government had a wide field to choose from if they wished to nullify the influence of Justice Higgins. Enmity between the Prime Minister and the Judge was old; when Hughes had Parliament pass another Act which set up conciliation tribunals, Justice Higgins took this as a further deliberate attempt to weaken his authority, and resigned from the Arbitration Court.<sup>2</sup>

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1

His remarks are reported in P.T.J., vol.IV, no.7, July 1920, p.153.

2

This account of Hughes' industrial legislation is drawn from Sawyer, Australian Federal Politics and Law, pp.196-9, and Turner, 'Industrial Labor and Politics', p.345.

By the end of 1920, trade unions had suffered another reverse at the hands of Hughes. When Mr A.B. Piddington presented the findings of the Basic Wage Commission that Hughes had promised in his policy speech, he created a sensation by announcing that the minimum cost of living at a reasonable standard for a man, his wife and three children was £5.16s. a week. The Prime Minister immediately obtained a certificate from the Commonwealth Statistician to say that the economy could not stand paying such an increase, and refused to implement the Commission's findings.<sup>1</sup>

The unions took no industrial action to make the Prime Minister change his mind, but presented their problem to the Arbitration Court. Mr Justice Powers heard the unions present a general case for the application of the Piddington standard in conjunction with a Gas Employees' case in 1921. He rejected their submissions, and although unions continued to base their claims for wage increases on the Commission's findings for some years, not one was ever successful in securing judgment in its terms.<sup>2</sup>

Their Honours were no more generous in their attitude towards the reduction of working hours. In December 1921 they dismissed the applications of four unions who sought a reduction of their members' working week to forty-four hours, and made it plain that their judgment in this 'Standard Hours Case' had a fairly general application.<sup>3</sup>

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1

Turner, 'Industrial Labor and Politics', p.346, and Anderson, Fixation of Wages in Australia, p.254.

2

The only practical results of the Commission's findings seem to have been the institution of quarterly adjustments and the addition of the 'Powers Three Shillings'. Anderson, Fixation of Wages in Australia, pp.270 and 337.

3

The 'Standard Hours Case' is reported at C.A.R., XV, p.1044.

In September 1922 the Court restored 48 hours as the working week for members of those Unions that had been fortunate enough to get their cases into Court before Hughes' amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act had become effective.<sup>1</sup>

In their judgments of the Standard Hours Case and elsewhere, their Honours had drawn attention to the depressed state of the Australian economy, and the need for quick recovery. In 1921, unemployment among trade unionists in all industries throughout the Commonwealth reached 11.2 per cent, and in engineering and mining, the figure was close to 15 per cent. In the following year, there was little improvement in general, and the engineering figures were worse. But in Books, Paper and Printing, unemployment throughout the Commonwealth remained about two per cent in 1921 and 1922, and in 1923 fell away to about one per cent.<sup>2</sup> Two Branches of the P.I.E.U.A. took advantage of these extraordinarily good years to work out policies so successful that they ceased to have any interest in obtaining an Award from a Federal Court that was subject to so many disadvantages. The West Australian Branch came to look on the P.I.E.U.A., as a body that would perform for it those limited but important functions of the old A.T.U.; the Queensland Branch came to look on its membership of the P.I.E.U.A. as something of an embarrassment.

In Perth, the condition of full employment in the printing industry coincided with a period of industrial

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1

The Australian Timber Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The case is reported at C.A.R., XVI, p.649.

2

The Commonwealth Year Books.

turbulence that lasted into the early twenties. In 1920, even the civil servants and school-teachers went on strike, and strike activity continued in the years after, though on a diminishing scale. Unemployment among Perth printers did not rise above four per cent in any quarter from 1920 to 1924, and in three it was below one per cent.<sup>1</sup>

During these years, the W.A. Branch held all its former gains and added to them as well. It compressed the 44 hour week into five days in all the shops at Fremantle, and in all except a few in Perth. It limited the operation of Linotype machines in jobbing shops to 42 hours by day, and 40 hours at night.<sup>2</sup> It established by Award the long-sought principle that a letterpress machinist should not be required to work more than one machine.<sup>3</sup> Nor did it make gains in conditions alone. By December 1923, the hand compositor's wage in real terms was 13.8 shillings above his wage ten years before, and he worked four hours less for it.<sup>4</sup> His 'real' hourly rate was higher than that

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1

Walker, 'Unemployment in Australia', Table 24.

2

W.A. Branch Half-Yearly Report to 30 June 1920.

3

Ibid., to 31 December 1920.

4

Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial), Perth, 1920-24.

	Money Wage (shillings)	Index Number	1913 Wage Adjusted to Index Number	Difference (shillings)
December 1920	82.5	1618	93.6	-11.1
January 1921	99.0	1700	98.4	+ 0.6
July 1921	101.5	1567	90.6	+10.9
December 1922	101.5	1468	85.0	+16.5
December 1923	101.5	1516	87.7	+13.8
September 1924	103.0	1584	92.6	+10.4

paid in any other State.<sup>1</sup>

Very little of this was achieved by peaceful negotiation. Between 1920 and 1924, the Branch was involved in at least six strikes, one strike threat, two overtime bans, and one ban on Saturday work.<sup>2</sup> Three of its strikes - the Newspaper Strike of 1922, and the Cardboard Boxmakers' and Jobbing Office Strikes of 1923-24 brought it into serious collision with the Union.

In July 1922, the newspaper employers of Perth attempted to increase the hours and reduce the wages of their employees. The men went out on 22 August, and did not resume work until five weeks later, when the employers agreed to continue the previous agreement for another twelve months. In a time of falling prices, the Branch was 'gratified' by the result.<sup>3</sup>

The Perth men were greatly assisted by money raised by the P.I.E.U.A., - in fact, they had more than they wanted and sent back some of it. But the Federal Council was not very pleased with the way the Perth Branch had spent Union funds, and adopted a motion which reduced Union strike pay from 50 shillings to 30 shillings a week for married men.<sup>4</sup> Councillor Keaughran reported to the

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Hand Compositor's Wage, Four Capitals, December 1923.

	Money Wage (shillings)	Perth Wage Adjusted to C.O.L. Index Figure	Deficit (shillings)
Brisbane	101*	103.7	- 2.7
Sydney	102*	117.3	- 15.3
Adelaide	102½	113.0	- 11.0
Melbourne	106½	117.6	- 11.6

\* For 44 hours

½ for 48 hours

<sup>2</sup>Only once was the Branch penalized by the Court, and then it was fined £50.

<sup>3</sup>P.T.J., vol.VI, no.11, November 1922, p.259. The only daily that managed to keep publishing was the West Australian.

<sup>4</sup>

Ibid., p.262.



Western Australian Branch members that they had not 'lost much sound advice by ...isolation and distance from the "heads".'<sup>1</sup> Worse was to come.

In the spring of 1923, the cardboard boxmakers in Perth began to organize themselves into a union, and were absorbed by the W.A. Branch. The boxmakers were mainly girls who worked on piece at a rate which was unknown, but returned them an average at about 30 shillings a week, - less than a third of the hand compositor's minimum. The Branch claimed for them a minimum rate of 50 shillings, a 44 hour week, and a fortnight's paid annual holiday. Some employers conceded the conditions, and the girls in the other factories struck. Five months later, terms were agreed on before the Industrial Registrar - 47s.6d. for 44 hours, and one week's paid holiday a year. The strike cost the Branch about £1,000, of which the Union contributed £205.<sup>2</sup>

The Boxmakers' Strike was scarcely over when another dispute began. In January 1924 the Branch attempted to enforce a condition of the Newspaper Award that all members employed in the production of newspapers should be paid at newspaper rates. The strike lasted eight weeks, and before it ended involved almost every jobbing office in Perth. It ended inconclusively with a guarantee of no victimization by the employers, and a mutual reference to the State Arbitration Court.<sup>3</sup> The Union contributed £1,047

<sup>1</sup> Report of Councillor to Branch members, loose pamphlet.

<sup>2</sup>

This account is drawn from P.T.J.s

Vol.VII: no.9, September 1923, p.177.  
no.10, October 1923, p.197.  
no.12, December 1923, p.247.

Vol.VIII: no.1, January 1924, p. 12.  
no.12, December 1924, p.235.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol.VIII, no.4, April 1924, p.77 and vol.VIII, no.12, December 1924, p.77.

to defray the Western Australian Branch's expenses of £2,208.<sup>1</sup>

In the Boxmakers' Strike, the Union had ceased to make strike payment to the Branch because it claimed that the Branch's failure to supply proper reports and balance sheets voided any agreement made. It took much the same stand on the Jobbing Strike, and paid almost £600 short of the sum due under the formula Council had agreed on after the 1922 Strike.<sup>2</sup> At the 1924 Council Meeting, the Western Australian Councillor tabled a motion requiring the Union to honour its obligations, or rescind the 1922 decision. Council defeated the motion. The W.A. Branch's Half-Yearly Report recalled that this was the usual fate of motions submitted by the Branch, 'probably by reason of the fact that our isolation is a bar to a proper understanding of Western Australia's aspirations'.<sup>3</sup>

In her isolation, the W.A. Branch had developed a highly successful policy that required of the Union only monetary aid. Relations with the Union were not such as to tempt the Branch to sacrifice what she had won for a hypothetical and unlikely gain in the Federal Arbitration Court. While most of the other Branches were preparing to talk Arbitration Court at the Federal Council of 1924, the W.A. Branch submitted a motion for the setting up of a Fighting Fund.

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<sup>1</sup>

P.I.E.U.A., Council Minutes, 25 and 28 November 1924.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 28 November 1924.

<sup>3</sup>

W.A. Branch Half-Yearly Report to 31 December 1924.

### The Queensland Branch

The W.A. Branch improved the conditions and wages of its members by adopting a policy of industrial conflict with employers; the Queensland Branch adopted a policy of industrial co-operation, and in this period of four years its gains were almost as impressive. In 1921, it secured the 44 hour week and the payment of weekly wages for Brisbane newspaper employees.<sup>1</sup> In 1921, the Consolidated Award of the State Arbitration Court provided for the general application of the 44 hour week throughout the Queensland printing industry, and preference in employment for members of the P.I.E.U.A.<sup>2</sup> Later in the year, Brisbane newspaper employees were rewarded with a fortnight's paid holiday a year.<sup>3</sup> As in Western Australia, real wages increased in value over the period. By June 1924, the Brisbane hand compositor was receiving 17s.4d. more in real terms each week than he had been in 1913, and was working four hours less.<sup>4</sup> His hourly rate was only slightly behind that of his Perth equivalent.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Branch Half-Yearly Report to 31 June 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Branch Interim Report to 30 June 1921.

<sup>3</sup> Queensland Branch Half-Yearly Report to 31 December 1921.

<sup>4</sup> Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial), Brisbane, 1920-24.

		Money Wage (shillings)	Index Number	1913 Wage Adjusted to Index Number	Difference (shillings)
May	1920	95*	1652	94.8	+ 0.2
December	1920	95*	1637	93.9	+ 1.1
March	1921	101½	1597	91.6	+ 9.4
December	1921	101½	1444	82.9	+ 18.1
December	1922	101½	1454	83.4	+ 17.6
December	1923	101½	1549	88.9	+ 11.1
March	1924	106½	1545	88.6	+ 17.4

\* For 45½ hours      ½ for 44 hours

<sup>5</sup>

See footnote 1 p. 393

A large part of the prosperity of Queensland Branch members was due to the continued generosity of Mr Justice McCawley and the Arbitration Court that the Labor government had set up. But after 1921, when the Government began to run into serious financial trouble, neither Justice McCawley nor any of his colleagues could afford to be so generous, and in February 1922 the Court announced that it had reduced the Brisbane basic wage. Wages paid under nearly all Queensland Awards were cut; but the members of the Queensland Branch did not suffer, and held their earlier gains in a period when prices were generally lower than they had been in 1920. This remarkable achievement resulted largely from the establishment of a Joint Industrial Council in the Brisbane printing industry.

The establishment of Joint Industrial Councils in the printing industry was canvassed extensively in Australia in the early 1920s.<sup>1</sup> The P.I.E.U.A. itself seems to have made the proposal first,<sup>2</sup> and in doing so probably had in mind the establishment of Whitley Councils in the British printing industry in 1919.<sup>3</sup> A Commonwealth Joint Industrial Council for the Australian printing industry offered the Union the advantages of a nation-wide agreement without the entanglements contingent upon accepting an award of the Federal Arbitration Court. But there was little prospect

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<sup>1</sup> See N.S.W. Master Printers' and Connected Trades' Association Minutes, 5 July, 1921, 7 August 1923, 24 July 1924 and 5 November 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1921.

<sup>3</sup> On the establishment of Industrial Councils in the British printing industry see Musson, The Typographical Association, p.373. Principal objectives were 'to secure complete organization of employers and employees...(and) to co-operate in the maintenance of fair prices and wages.' The Minutes of the P.I.E.U.A. Council Meeting in 1921 mentions both the Whitley Councils and a similar organization in the South African printing trade.

of this. The Master Printers' Associations of the various states either could not or would not form a national organization;<sup>1</sup> and the Victorian Master Printers' organization was strongly opposed to the establishment of a joint industrial council.<sup>2</sup> After a year or so, the P.I.E.U.A. itself had second thoughts,<sup>3</sup> and the only Joint Industrial Council ever established in Australian printing industry was in Queensland.

Here the Master Printers' Association was meeting serious difficulty in its aim of 'removing obstructions to legitimate profit'.<sup>4</sup> In its gloom at the decisions of the Queensland Arbitration Court, the Q.M.P.A. considered that the very existence of the printing industry was in doubt.<sup>5</sup> In mid-1921, the Brisbane Typothetae ceased to operate.<sup>6</sup>

Under these circumstances, collaboration with the Union in joint industrial council became a proposition most attractive to the Queensland Master Printers' Association. An agreement on wages and conditions offered the prospect of stabilizing costs to the point where price-fixing would

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<sup>1</sup> A national association of master printers was not accomplished until 1925, when the Commercial Printing Award of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court virtually made one obligatory.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of N.S.W. Master Printers' and Connected Trades' Association, 17 September 1924.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 400

<sup>4</sup> Q.M.P.A. Bulletin, vol.I, no.1, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> On the decision of the Queensland Arbitration Court to reduce hours in jobbing offices to 45½, the Q.M.P.A. Bulletin (Vol.I, no.8, p.15) commented: 'This struggle is going on in such a fashion that unless we watch it, it can only be finished when we as master printers are finished too.'

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Vol.II, no.3, p.10.

become an attractive proposition to its members. Just before the Court's decision to reduce the basic wage, the Association invited delegates from the Queensland Branch of the Union to discuss the formation of a joint industrial council with them.<sup>1</sup> At the subsequent meeting, the members said

that a tremendous amount of undercutting when competing for jobs was being experienced, and to such an extent that the stability of reputable employers was in jeopardy. It had been suggested that a joint committee composed of a like number of representatives from the employers and the employees organizations be constituted with a view to minimizing the evil - otherwise....the only alternative was a reduction in wages which was not desired by them.<sup>2</sup>

After some discussion, the Queensland Branch of the Union decided to join with the Q.M.P.A. in setting up a Joint Industrial Council.<sup>3</sup> The Council employed an accountant who worked out an 'Efficiency Hour Cost' which was to be the basis of all quotes submitted by members.<sup>4</sup> In three months, this system controlled '98 per cent of job printing in Brisbane'<sup>5</sup> and members were very happy with its results.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Branch Minutes of Board Meetings, 1 February 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Neither the Q.M.P.A. Bulletin nor the Minutes of the Queensland Branch give any account of the discussion, and we are left to speculate on the Queensland Branch's reasons for joining in the Council. Presumably the Masters were willing to make some bargain about holding wages at their present level, despite the fall in cost of living figures that would move the Court to reduce them if they made application. It would be very interesting to know how the branch managed to square up this kind of collaboration in its mind with the experience of the Brisbane General Strike.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of P.I.E.U.A. Council, 12 March 1925.

<sup>5</sup> Q.M.P.A. Bulletin, Vol.III, No.7.

<sup>6</sup> 'The Printing Trade was never in a better condition than it was today, through the work of the Joint Council' - Q.M.P.A. Bulletin, Vol.III. no.11. p.16. See also N.S.W. Master Printers'

But there had to be some way of dealing with those who were tempted to base their quotes on a figure below the Efficiency Hour Cost, and the kind of assistance the Queensland Branch could give was most helpful here. When in 1924, the proprietor of the Ipswich Leader refused to join the Master Printers' Association or take any notice of the 'Efficiency Hour Cost', the Branch withdrew its men, declared the office black, and the Master Printers' Association paid the strike money. When the dispute was referred into Court, Mr Justice McCawley found that the only cause of the strike was the proprietor's failure to join the M.P.A. He severely censured the Branch:

The onus is on you to show the system is not against the policy of the Court....You are in a beautiful position. You have an excellent combination with employers. You are kissing each other's legs, but where does the public come in?

His Honour suspended the Award so far as it applied to Ipswich.<sup>1</sup>

The Ipswich Leader case attracted the attention of the Union Federal Council that met in March 1925. Three years before, Council had concerned itself with the question of the Queensland Branch and the Joint Industrial Council, and delegates had disapproved of further participation by the Branch. In view of the Branch's failure to withdraw, the N.S.W. delegates moved that the Queensland Branch be directed to leave the Council within six months. The vote was a tie, and the motion was lost.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 12 March 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Like Western Australia, Queensland had developed a successful policy which strained her relations with the Union. The Branch showed practically no interest in a Federal Award at any time, and in January 1924, made a complete break by refusing to send a representative to a Federal Log Committee meeting in Melbourne.<sup>1</sup> Despite appeals from the Federal Executive of the Union,<sup>2</sup> Queensland after that ceased to take even a formal interest in seeking a Federal Award.

The South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales Branches

Since Queensland and Western Australia insisted increasingly on their independence, the decision to approach the Federal Court rested with the other branches. But the Court's decisions and the amendments to the Arbitration Act were forbidding. Three times in the years 1920-22 the Council of the Union decided on the formulation of a Federal claim; three times the Log was allowed to lapse.

The greatest deterrent to Federal action was the attitude of the Court to the granting of the 44 hour week. In the craft unions particularly, the theories of workers' control and of social reorganization had by 1920 yielded place to the attaining of this simple, tangible goal. It stood as a kind of symbol of the better world that was to come after the war. Shorter hours had a more permanent advantage than increased wages, whose advantage in those times of rapid inflation could vanish, as E.C. Magrath pointed out,

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1

Queensland Branch Minutes of Board Meetings, 14 January 1924.

2

P.T.J., vol.VIII, no.6, June 1924, p.113.



'like smoke in the wind'.<sup>1</sup>

After 1920, hope of reduction in the hours of work became the South Australian Branch's strongest reason for seeking a Federal Award. Although rates on Adelaide's morning dailies remained about 15 per cent lower than in Melbourne, the South Australian Wages Board suffered some change of heart and awarded the commercial hand compositor substantial increases.<sup>2</sup> But still the Branch Board of Management was not satisfied. It reminded itself (and was often reminded) that only in Adelaide did newspaper compositors work 48 hours at night.<sup>3</sup> Of all the Branches, it had made least progress towards shortening working hours.<sup>4</sup> In 1922, when the other Branches took their most pessimistic view of the Federal Court, South Australia still was in

<sup>1</sup> 'Unity', writing in P.T.J., vol.III, no.5, May 1919, p.114, said : 'Capitalism will not readily shorten the working week. It would rather give an increased wage, as it knows, and we know, too, that it can filch wages back.'

<sup>2</sup>

Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial) Adelaide, 1920-24.

		Money Wage (shillings)	Index Number	1914 Wage Adjusted to Index Number	Difference (shillings)
January	1920	76.5	1585	82.3	- 5.8
July	1920	93.0	1868	97.0	- 4.0
December	1920	93.0	1816	94.3	- 1.3
June	1921	93.0	1700	88.2	+ 4.8
September	1921	102.0	1597	82.9	+19.1
December	1921	102.0	1523	79.0	+23.0
December	1922	102.0	1565	81.2	+21.8
December	1923	102.0	1688	87.6	+14.4
December	1924	105.5	1673	86.8	+18.7

<sup>3</sup>

P.T.J., vol.VIII, no.12, December 1924, p.225, and  
P.T.J., vol.VIII, no.3, March 1924, p.52.

<sup>4</sup>

Ibid., vol.VII, no.5, May 1923, p.82.

favour of lodging a claim there for 44 hours.<sup>1</sup> But it could find no partner.

Of the other Branches, Victoria showed most signs of warming to Federal action. The very institution of the Victorian Branch in 1921 had been some endorsement of a Federal arbitration policy. In 1922 the Branch decided against the lodging of a Federal plaint, but with the qualification that the Log should be kept in shape for quick action as soon as the time was opportune.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for Victoria's interest were obvious enough. Despite their steady increase, the Branch's assets by mid-1923 were still less than half what they had been just prior to the 1920 strike.<sup>3</sup> It could follow no policy like that of the W.A. Branch. Its only choice was the Wages Board or the Federal Court; and the Wages Board was behaving very badly. The adjustment it made to the hand compositor's wages in 1921 left him four shillings above his 1913 equivalent at the end of the year. By the Half-Yearly General Meeting in August 1923, he was over ten shillings below.<sup>4</sup> Nor was this all. The Master

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It is a matter of speculation whether the S.A. Branch was sincere in this, or whether it merely wished to keep pressure on the local wages board.

2

Victorian Branch Minutes, 18 February 1922.

3 The Balance Sheet at 30 June 1923 showed assets of £8,620.16s.1d., about £5,000 of which were easily realizable. Assets at 31 December 1919 had been nearly £18,000. £18,000.

4

Hand Compositor's Wage (Commercial), Melbourne, 1920-24.

	Money Wage (shillings)	Index Number	1913 Wage Adjusted to Index Number	Difference (shillings)
December 1920	96	1892	119.7	-23.7
December 1921	106	1610	101.9	+ 4.1
December 1922	106	1643	104.0	+ 2.0
August 1923	106	1839	116.4	-10.4
December 1923	106	1756	111.1	- 5.1
December 1924	115.5	1692	107.1	+ 8.4

Printers Association's representatives on the Wages Board were seeking an increase in the apprentice ratio to one apprentice to each two journeymen. Further, they wanted to increase the hours of Linotype operators, decrease their wages, and provide for apprenticeship to machine composing alone. The Branch's representatives feared that the Chairman was far too impressed with the Master Printers' arguments.<sup>1</sup>

The Half-Yearly General Meeting acted accordingly. When James Vinnard, the old general of Victorian isolation, moved that the delegates to Federal Council be 'instructed not to support the South Australian motion for the drawing-up of a Federal Log', it voted against him.<sup>2</sup> In place of his motion it resolved that a plaint for wages, hours and conditions for all sections other than the metropolitan dailies be drawn up, and forwarded to the Branches for adoption.<sup>3</sup>

In moving for a Federal claim, both South Australia and Victoria had in mind the decision given a few months before by the Full Arbitration Court in the case of Australian Timber Workers' Union versus Angliss and Co. The employers had sought an increase in hours from 44 to 48 (the recognized hours in the industry generally) in the working time of employees in those sections that still worked only 44 hours a week. The Court refused the employers' claim, and in giving judgment said:

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1

Victorian Branch Half-Yearly Report, 30 June 1923. His decision when announced proved their suspicions correct.

2

Victorian Branch Minutes, 25 August 1923.

3

Ibid.

It must be remembered that the Court has never said that it will not consider the question of reducing the standard hours in any industry.... Finally, if the Court bases its decision not to reduce standard hours because it is satisfied that the industries and the country cannot at present afford to pay the extra cost of production which would necessarily follow by the reduction of hours of duty, it will, I think, compel this Court to view favourably any application to grant 44 hours a week when the industries can bear the extra burden or when any industry can be successfully carried on without adding too greatly to the burdens of the general public. That is, the Court is not likely I think, to insist on men working four hours a week extra simply to enable employers to get an additional 8 to 10 per cent. added to their profits...<sup>1</sup>

This decision had some most important implications for South Australia and Victoria. If they could induce all or some of the Branches that worked 44 hours to join them in an application to the Federal Court, then they should have little trouble in showing that forty-four hours had done no harm to the printing industry where it applied. This would have been a powerful argument for its extension. Speaking to the members of the South Australian Branch, Arthur Leavold, Union President in 1923, said 'that he thought the Court's decision in the Timber Workers' Case would bring about a forty-four hour case in the Federal Court for the printing industry'.<sup>2</sup> But seeing

<sup>1</sup>C.A.R., vol.XVII, p.250.

<sup>2</sup>S.A. Branch Minutes, 14 April, 1923.  
Arthur Mills Leavold (1888-1952): Apprenticed as a bookbinder, Detmold's, Melbourne; held various executive offices in the Federated Bookbinders and their Victorian Branch; first Secretary, Victorian Branch, P.I.E.U.A., 1920; Victorian Branch delegate, Trades Hall Council, 1920-52; Organizer, Victorian Branch, 1921-32; President, P.I.E.U.A., 1922-3; Assistant Secretary, Victorian Branch, 1932-50; Secretary, 1950-52. Mr Leavold was also a Director of the Industrial Printing and Publicity Company, and a Labor Councillor of Essendon City.

that there was little hope of either Queensland or Western Australia joining the 48 hour Branches, Leavold must have been counting on New South Wales.

Under the provisions of the Forty-four Hour Act passed by the Storey Labor Government, the 44-hour week for printers had been proclaimed in New South Wales on 1 May 1921. But a Nationalist government took office in April 1922, and by September it had got the Eight Hours (Amendment) Act through all stages. This Act provided that parties interested in restoring the 48 hour week to any industry could seek the approval of the State Industrial Court, and the onus would then be on those who wished to retain 44 hours to show that their health and well-being would suffer by the restoration of the extra four hours. The Act produced an industrial furor that the N.S.W. Branch did not escape, and provided the loyal supporters of arbitration policy who formed the Branch Executive with their biggest crisis since the Margins Judgment of 1917.<sup>1</sup>

The principal business of the Half-Yearly General Meeting in August 1923 was to decide what action the Branch would take. E.C. Magrath told the meeting it had two choices: to accept the decision of the legislature and the Court, or to accept the Board of Management's proposal for a legal strike. Other members pointed out that the latter would require combination with the Labour Council (with which the Branch remained disaffiliated), and urged that if the strike was to be effective, newspaper employees would have to come with the men in the jobbing offices. Messrs Ratcliffe and Bullôt (veteran arbitrationists

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<sup>1</sup>The Board of Trade's recent reduction of the living wage had not improved their temper. The Master Printers' application for a reduction in the Award rates had succeeded but not all employers had taken advantage of the lowered minimum.

and newspaper men) were the spokesmen of those who were opposed to any sort of strike.<sup>1</sup>

The recommendation was referred back to the Board. In October, the Master Printers applied to the Court for the restoration of a 48 hour week. The Board set up an Emergency Committee, and adjourned another motion that demanded a legal strike if the Master Printers succeeded.<sup>2</sup> While the case was in Court, it donated (by 17 votes to 15) £5 to the Trades and Labor Council to assist in financing a lecturing tour for Tom Mann - despite the fact that he was 'a red-ragger and a socialist'.<sup>3</sup> It was saved from crisis by the decision of the Court, which found that lead dust constituted a health hazard in the printing industry. The hours of work would therefore remain at 44, except for bookbinders, lithographers and cardboard box-makers.<sup>4</sup> The Court however granted the employers the right to re-open the case if they so desired.

For the next nine months there was uneasy quiet while the Branch Board of Management wondered whether the employers would exercise their right. When it debated the proposals for a Federal plaint on the Federal Council Agenda, the Board recalled the decision in the Timber Workers' Case, but concluded that no claim should be lodged.<sup>5</sup> When Council met later in the month, it resolved to formulate a Federal Log, but the South Australians and Victorians could hold out little hope for help from New South Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 14 August 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 10 October 1922.

<sup>3</sup> N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 20 November 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4 December 1922. Where these other workers were on the same floor as the typographical section, the order did not apply.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3 September 1923.

But New South Wales was not going to be allowed to escape so easily. In October, the Master Printers again began to conduct medical examinations of some of their employees. The Branch Executive took this as presaging an application to the Court, and reconsidered the position. It got half-way to joining the Federal plaint. E.C. Magrath reported that, if they did

there would probably be an increase on the wages side...(but) we could not say what the Court might do in respect to hours. An application to the Court may establish or lose the 44 hour week...We would shortly be compelled to choose between the Federal and State Courts...In the light of all the circumstances, the Executive had decided it ought to co-operate with the Union in framing a Log satisfactory to all the Branches.<sup>1</sup>

By early January, 'the Master Printers' Association was striving to get into Court before the vacation'.<sup>2</sup> The Half-Yearly Report reminded members that they would have to make their crucial decision by the end of March. On 6 March the employers offered a 46 hour week as a compromise. The Board rejected it.<sup>3</sup>

Only one thing now would keep them in the State system. After hearing the Master Printers' Application, Mr Justice Curlewis had said he thought that 48 hours should apply only if the hazard of lead dust were removed from the industry. He would draw up a set of conditions that employers would have to abide by if they wished to work

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<sup>1</sup>

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 22 October 1923. It was now clear that Victoria and South Australia would go ahead; if N.S.W. joined them, it would prejudice action in the State Court.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., 24 January 1924.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., 10 March 1924.

their men for 48 hours.<sup>1</sup> There was the hope that the conditions would prove so stringent that no employer would adopt them.

But His Honour subsequently announced that he would accept as the criteria for the establishment of his standards the medical evidence put forward by the Master Printers. E.C. Magrath advised the Board that this was not good enough.<sup>2</sup> The Board recommended a Special General Meeting to adopt the Federal Log 'so far as it applies to commercial printing offices',<sup>3</sup> and the meeting adopted it unanimously.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Commercial Award, the Newspaper Award and the Country Agreement

Even after the N.S.W. Branch had committed itself, the Federal claim was still not safe. The Tasmanian Branch raised issues which again challenged the sovereignty of the Union, weakened the substance of the plaint, and wrecked a procedural agreement the Union had made with the employers.

The Tasmanian Branch had existed only since October, 1921. Before that, the old Victorian Typographical Society had had jurisdiction over the northern part of the island. After the Victorian Typographical Society became part of the Union, the P.I.E.U.A., established both Hobart and Launceston as sub-branches of the Tasmanian Branch. The sub-branches jointly approached the State Wages Board, and got one Determination that covered the whole of the island.

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<sup>1</sup>

P.T.J., vol.VIII, no.4, April 1924, p.79.

<sup>2</sup>

N.S.W. Branch Minutes, 7 April 1924.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid., 5 May 1924.

<sup>4</sup>

Ibid., 5 June 1924.



It was, however, a poor Determination, especially in its newspaper sections,<sup>1</sup> and most members of the Tasmanian Branch were newspaper workers. They were far worse off than any of their mainland confreres, and by 1923 were very happy to join them in a Federal plaint.

But a serious difficulty developed after the Committee that drafted the Federal Log had negotiated on procedure with the employers. They agreed mutually that the claim should be heard in three parts: the first for a Metropolitan Jobbing Award, the second for a Newspaper Award, the third for a Country Award. The Tasmanian Branch representative agreed with this division; but on his return to Tasmania, both the Launceston and Hobart sub-branches voted to withdraw from the plaint. They objected to the claims for Hobart and Launceston being heard separately on the grounds that the application of the Commonwealth Cost-of-Living Index figures would result in a lower rate being paid in Launceston. They would join the plaint only if one case was presented for the whole of the island.<sup>2</sup>

The P.I.E.U.A., Federal Council pointed out that the Union could do this only by repudiating its agreements on procedure. On the day the Court actually began hearing the case, Council summoned two representatives of the Tasmanian Branch and attempted to negotiate a settlement. The only result was a series of motions which threatened to expel all members of the Tasmanian Branch if the Branch

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It provided a wage of £5.8s. for the hand compositor. In money terms, this was the lowest rate paid in any of the capitals. But by the last quarter of 1924, Hobart had the highest Cost-of-Living Index Number of them all.

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This account is based on the Minutes of Meeting of the P.I.E.U.A., Council held 10 March 1925.

persisted in its attitude, and provided for their enrolment in a new Tasmanian Branch of the P.I.E.U.A.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the Tasmanian Branch continued to be represented by its own counsel, much to the embarrassment of E.C. Magrath, who was acting as Advocate for the Union.

There was, it turned out, plenty of time to reach agreement. Mr Deputy President Webb began hearing the claim for a Metropolitan Commercial Award in March 1925. The legal process did not conclude until 12 December 1927, when the Full Bench of the Arbitration Court decided that the standard hours of labour in the printing industry should be 44. In the years between, Mr Deputy President Webb had handed down a Commercial Award for Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart, and a Newspaper Award for the last two cities. The Court had also registered as an Award an agreement for the regulation of all printing offices outside the metropolitan areas in the four States.

One of His Honour's chief cares in the making of both his Awards was to ensure equality of competition. During the hearing of the Commercial Printing case he stated

that one of the most important functions that the Commonwealth sovereign power can bring into effect is the synchronising of wage conditions throughout the Commonwealth. There cannot be - there never could be - free interstate trade without fair interstate wage conditions... 2

His Awards took notice of promoting interstate trade by 'synchronising' not only wages, but conditions. They were not concerned with innovation. Between them, the three

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<sup>1</sup>

P.I.E.U.A., Council Minutes, 12 March 1925.

<sup>2</sup>

Transcript of Evidence, Commercial Printing Case, p.129.

awards harmonized conventional practice within the Australian printing industry, and modulated it to a kind of golden mean. They added the force of Federal law impartially to customs centuries old, and to concessions recently won from wages boards. Thereby they preserved the privileges of the craft.

All three awards agreed on the traditional limitation of labour supply. Employers had to indenture their apprentices for six years, and allow them time off for instruction at a trade school during working hours. In commercial shops, the employer could indenture only one apprentice for every three journeymen permanently employed; in daily newspaper offices, only one apprentice for every five, to a maximum of eight apprentices. Unless there was a weekly paper associated with the daily, the proprietor could not apprentice boys at all, because the awards provided that newspaper apprentices should spend most of their time on the preparation of a weekly paper.<sup>1</sup>

Other award clauses regulating apprenticeship protected the journeyman against present as well as future competition from junior labour. All boys who worked around a printing shop had to be apprenticed, and on daily newspapers, no boy under the age of nineteen was allowed to work at night. The awards also protected the male journeymen from the competition of females. They reserved to the male the exclusive right to the best-paid work in the industry, and thereby completed the process begun by the unions twenty years before. In jobbing shops females could do no job better paid than

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Metropolitan Jobbing Award, Section 31, and Newspaper Award, Section 35.

quarter binding.<sup>1</sup> In daily newspaper offices, they could - for all practical purposes - do no work at all.<sup>2</sup>

Wages and conditions on Australian metropolitan dailies had always been superior to those in jobbing offices. Mr Justice Webb recognized and confirmed this condition of the trade in several ways. Because he considered it the established custom of the trade, he awarded two weeks' paid annual leave to newspaper workers, while those in jobbing shops received statutory holidays only. Because he took the view that 44 hours were 'standard' in the newspaper industry, he awarded a forty-four hour week on his own authority; those who did not work on newspapers had to wait until 1928 before the 44-hour judgment of the Full Court became effective. But he made clearest recognition of the newspaper industry's attractiveness by awarding its employees an industry allowance. This allowed him to apply with little change those margins he had established in the Commercial Printing Award, and yet preserve the custom of higher payment for the newspaper

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<sup>1</sup>There was no specific clause limiting females to this kind of work, but the wages schedule specified jobs for males, and jobs for females. The highest margin for any of the jobs listed under the heading 'Adult Females' was ten shillings for the cloth box-maker. The Female quarter-binder's margin was nine shillings.

<sup>2</sup>

In the Newspaper Award, Section 30 prohibited the employment of females at night. Section 8(a) provided one job for females on evening dailies as copyholders - at a maximum of a few shillings above the female basic wage. There was no evening daily in Hobart. There was one in Adelaide, but the S.A. Branch seems to have persuaded its management not to take advantage of the clause.

worker.<sup>1</sup>

For the previous twenty-five years, State wages boards and arbitration courts had independently been establishing hierarchies of wages in the printing industry. By the twenties, there were more similarities than differences in the State patterns, and Mr Justice Webb was able to produce a standard version without doing great violence to any particular system. To the machine compositor he awarded a margin of 36 shillings, and to the reader, 30 shillings. These were exceptionally high margins; the Court's usual margin for the skilled tradesman was 24 shillings, and this His Honour awarded to a very large group of printing craftsmen: the hand compositor in all his varieties, the electrotyper, the stereotyper, letterpress, rotary and offset machinists, all craftsmen bookbinders, paper rulers and guillotine operators. The highest margin paid to workers outside the printing section was the 18 shillings awarded to the carton setter. The best-paid of the females was the quarter-binder, who received a margin of nine shillings a week.<sup>2</sup> The Award provided that these margins were to be added to a uniform basic wage calculated from figures supplied by the Commonwealth Statistician for the four capitals concerned.<sup>3</sup>

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C.A.R., vol.XXIII, p.149. His Honour awarded the Industry Allowance on two principal grounds: the 'prosperous condition of the industry' and its 'exacting nature'. The second consideration allowed him to award a smaller Industry Allowance in Hobart (where the pace was not so hectic), thereby aiding the proprietors of the Mercury to recover from the depression which His Honour was convinced was affecting all Tasmanian industry.

2

Tables 'B' and 'C' in Section 4 of the Metropolitan Jobbing Award sets out the margins payable to each class of employees.

3

£4.6s. a week when the Award first began to operate.

This had much the same effect on the existing wages paid under State determinations as many other Federal awards had done. The Commercial Printing Award tended to raise wages in the more poorly-paid States, and reduce those in the better paid. In Victoria, it confirmed a reduction of 5s.6d. a week in the hand compositor's wage just made by the State Wages Board. In the other States, it raised the hand compositor's wage by up to eight shillings a week. In the first quarter of 1928, when the Federal 44 hour week first applied, the position levelled out somewhat. The Victorian hand compositor's real hourly rate rose over the hourly rate he had been receiving just before the Federal Award applied by the same amount as the N.S.W. rate. South Australian and Tasmanian rates showed somewhat greater gains.<sup>1</sup> Victorians could console themselves with the reflection that they had escaped from the menaces of the State Wages Board, and had at last secured 44 hours and weekly wages. N.S.W. Branch members could feel relief that their 44 hour week was now beyond the reach of the Master Printers' Association and the whims of the State's electors. Both branches had the best of both worlds, in that their daily newspapers agreements granted wages and conditions far better than anything the Federal Newspaper Award provided.

<sup>1</sup>Hourly Rates in shillings, paid to the Hand Compositor, under the last State Awards applying in 1925 and under the first Federal Award after the application of the 44 hour week in 1928.

	N.S.W.	Victoria	S.A.	Tasmania
Hourly rate, Last quarter, 1925	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.3
Its equivalent, January 1928	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.2
Money rate per hour, January 1928	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6
Difference	+0.2	+0.2	+0.3	+0.4

In this Award, the Hobart men clearly made the greatest gains. For the first time, they were to enjoy paid annual holidays.<sup>1</sup> They were awarded increases in every category except one, and the increases were nearly all around ten per cent. Nonetheless, Hobart wages remained about five per cent behind those paid in Adelaide.<sup>2</sup> This difference represented Mr Justice Webb's monetary assessment of the newspaper industry's disabilities in Hobart. Similar considerations influenced the representatives of the Australian Provincial Press Association and the P.I.E.U.A. in making the Agreement that became the Country Award.

This Agreement was the means of reconciling the Tasmanian Branch and the Union, and securing substantial rises for members of the Union in small country towns. Towns were graded in four categories A (special) to C, according to population. Those in the A (special) grade enjoyed near-parity with the Hobart provisions of the Newspaper Award, and Launceston was included in this grade. Thus the Union was able to have its way on procedure, and the Tasmanian Branch was able to get the result it wanted. Wages in the A, B and C grades were lower, but even in the C grade towns, the hand compositor still received 90 per cent of the wages provided by the Federal Award for his Hobart equivalent.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C.A.R., vol.XXIII, p.145

<sup>2</sup>

See P.T.J., vol.X, no.4, 1926, p.148. Linotype mechanics - of whom there were about half a dozen - suffered a reduction.

<sup>3</sup>

The award is recorded at C.A.R., vol.XXIII, p.644. Since papers published in 'C' grade towns were weeklies the proper comparison is with the Hobart day rates. The day rate provided for the Hobart newspaper hand compositor was £5.16s.; for the 'C' grade man, £5.4s.

This wage structure remains with the industry still.<sup>1</sup> The addition of the Court's conservatism to the Union's instinct to preserve the rights and privilege of its craft has made for great stability in conditions of employment. The industry however was not alone in acquiring stability. With the issue of the Commercial Award, the continued existence of the P.I.E.U.A., passed beyond doubt. There had to be a continuing Federal body to police the Award, to defend it, and if possible, improve it. The Union had spent over £8,000 of member's money,<sup>2</sup> and risked extinction more than once. It had however finally justified its existence.

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Margins, 1925 and 1965, Commercial Printing and Graphic Arts Awards.

	1925		1965	
	Margins in Shillings	% Machine Compositor's Margin	Margins in Shillings	% Machine Compositor's Margin
Machine Compositor	36	100.0	145	100.0
Reader	30	83.3	122.5	84.5
Hand Compositor	24	66.7	112	77.2
Carton Setter	18	50.0	81.75	56.4
Female Quarter Binder	9	25.0	40.5	27.9

2

A Balance Sheet, printed in the P.T.J., for February 1927 showed £6,251.19.2d. spent on Federal Arbitration from 1 January 1924 to 31 August 1926. There was another £1,187.19.8d. spent between 31 August 1926 and 31 August 1927, and another £791.4.11d. in the next financial year.



PERSPECTIVE, 1850 - 1927.

After the Stationers' Guild had ceased to protect its members, British compositors began to organize themselves into trade societies which represented the interests of journeymen only. But few of the society men considered themselves part of any working class movement; old traditions prevented most of them from sinking their craft identity. Rather than pursue any working class Utopia, the typographical societies sought to protect the privileges the craft had retained, and restore those it had lost when the Guild became powerless. Compositors who migrated to Australia during the gold rushes of the fifties found in the printing trade conditions that led them to believe that they could not only establish in the new land those privileges they still enjoyed, but even recapture that position in society their craft forefathers had known. The problems of other working men were not theirs.

The main source of their belief was the prosperity of the colonial printing industry. It was based on the rapid expansion of daily newspapers in the capital cities, and the establishment of small offices first in the goldfields towns, and later in the city itself. In the morning dailies, the ancient Chapel facilitated advantageous bargaining. Compositors paid by the piece became the highest paid of all craftsmen. A rich and rapidly expanding population offered journeyman compositors with a little capital the chance to become master printers, and a good many of them took it.

Both these developments strengthened the cult of temperance and the ethic of self-improvement. Compositors setting on the piece trained themselves like athletes to attain greater speed. Aspiring proprietors read avidly with the conviction that knowledge was power, and learnt to play brass instruments in cultivation of their musical talent. They displayed their abilities by writing learned letters or original poetry to the Circular and Journal, and giving cornet solos or recitations at social evenings.

These skills marked them as men of a superior class, and the emphasis they placed on craft custom added to their distinction. The Chapel held wayzgooses in the new land, and revived its office rules. The older 'knights of the stick and rule' were conscious of their craft customs until the day they 'cut the line' and 'filed their last doc.'. They gloried in the successes of those of their brothers in the craft who had gone on to other things - scores of master printers, a dozen or so parliamentary back-benchers, and clergymen, editors, journalists, schoolmasters, justices and councillors whose names together were a legion.

The Compositors' Societies from the fifties to the nineties were therefore strongly inclined to treat the masters 'just a step above them' as partners in schemes for enhancing the prosperity of the industry and protecting the 'fair' employer from his 'unfair' competitor. They held aloof from the Eight-Hour movements of the fifties rarely marched in Eight-Hour Celebrations, and when they did, made displays based on craft rather than political motifs. Even those who did believe in closer combination with other unions were often disposed to look on those who were not members as drunkards, incompetents or men lacking in moral courage. This sense of superiority suggested a preference for a Liberal alliance in parliament,

rather than the creation of a specifically working-class Labor party.

After the fifties, the strength of those forces that made for the elimination of craft distinctions began to increase. Some of these were long-term in effect. The rate of migration slowed, and British born and trained compositors made up a diminishing proportion of the work force. Their replacements were colonials often only half-taught, whose contact with craft custom was indirect and relative slight. For them, 'wayzgooses' were never anything other than picnics.

Other conditions were more immediate in their effects. For all of the sixties and for some of the seventies unemployment among compositors was severe enough to cause the distress of many who were obviously 'respectable' tradesmen. Society members lost much of their sense of identity with those 'just a step above' when they were out of work for long periods. They sought allies among other trade unionists, and in some colonies became leaders of inter-union organization. They came to regard the strike as a normal tactical weapon, and to rely less on the 'fair' employer.

This change of view had some important results. Because strikes had little chance of being effective if large numbers of compositors remained beyond union control, the typographical societies began to admit men without indentures, and encourage the unemployed to join by instituting benefit funds. In the eighties, the Australasian Typographical Union became increasingly important as a national mobilizer of strike funds, and the societies began to show more interest in the

Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses. Their tendency to think of themselves as part of a working class was strengthened by the strikes in Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide in 1889, and especially by defeat in the last two.

The strikes in Brisbane and Adelaide were at root strikes which aimed to defend the unionist's right to refuse to work with non-unionists, and the Maritime Strikes were concerned with the same issue. The fight of the unions in the Maritime Strike was the fight of all unionists; society men saw the struggle as one between Capital and Labour, and in 1891 talked with enthusiasm of working class solidarity. But the Great Strikes ended in defeat, the deepest depression the century had known settled on the land, the trade union movement almost collapsed, and the struggle for work made 'battling' almost obligatory on thousands. When Linotypes and revolutionary changes in printing styles turned the composing trade upside down, the typographical societies had to cope with the technical revolution without the help of a trade union movement. Accordingly, they set out to save themselves, and for all of them this meant some reliance on the wages boards and arbitration courts established by all the State governments in the first few years of the twentieth century. The Melbourne society was least affected by its experience with State arbitration machinery, and the New South Wales Typographical Association most.

The wages boards and arbitration courts secured the privileges of the craft endangered by years of heavy unemployment and individual bargaining. Awards, determinations and registered agreements limited the number of apprentices and improvers that could be employed, and guaranteed a minimum wage that the societies or their individual members were often able to raise considerably

as the expansion of the industry made even more scarce the tradesmen whose numbers the courts and boards had earlier limited. By 1910, all the Societies had awards or determinations which were valuable to them in one way or another.

Since arbitration and industrial courts could suspend awards and determinations of unions that went on strike, their possession was a powerful deterrent to militancy. There were other deterrents not so apparent. Courts and boards took up much of the typographical societies' time and money. In their own interests, they had to organize kindred tradesmen and unskilled workers in city and country. They had then to prepare a separate case, and school new witnesses for each trade section. The societies took on more staff, whose salaries were subtractions from assets that could have been used in time of strike. There were political complications as well. Commitment of a society's destiny to an arbitration court or wages board made affiliation to the Labor party almost obligatory as a means of exercising influence when the relevant Acts were being amended. Labor politicians intent on winning elections found strikes embarrassing, and frequently went to some lengths to prevent or end them.

Reliance on arbitration courts and wages boards also helped prevent the typographical societies from re-establishing anything like the sense of working class solidarity they had known in 1891. Negotiations that took place before court or board appearances pushed the societies into alliance with the 'fair' employer once more. As awards and determinations came to express rates paid in terms of a 'living wage' and a 'margin for skill', societies had to gather evidence that put a premium on skill and emphasized the differences rather than the similarities between craftsmen and others. The substitution

of Court procedure for strike strategy deprived the societies of the experience of common action with other trade unions, and after the provision of a Commonwealth arbitration system, they became increasingly preoccupied with the advantages that would accrue to their own members by a transfer from one system to the other.

The societies' lack of interest in strikes and their failure to develop once more a sense of belonging to a working class did not result entirely from their preference for settlement of disputes by State-provided machinery. Hand compositors were among the highest-paid tradesmen,<sup>1</sup> and after 1906, their chances of becoming a successful master printer improved, and remained much the same for the rest of the period.<sup>2</sup> The premium that new styles in commercial printing put on the hand compositor's aesthetic talents made it possible for a skilful man to command payment substantially above award rates, or to advance to a foreman's position. There was a renewed emphasis on sobriety and improvement, but this time self-education took a far narrower and more 'practical' form.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The New South Wales Statistical Register for 1926-27 (when wage rates due under the Federal Awards were first paid for a full year) listed about 1,100 separate occupations that did not require management of other men. The jobbing hand compositor earned more than wage-earners in about 1,020 of them. The newspaper hand compositor earned about £1 a week more than the jobbing hand compositor.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup>The Melbourne Typographical Society had a library of over two thousand books in the eighties. It sold its entire library in 1913. The brass bands that had once been the pride of some of the daily newspaper offices seemed to have collapsed before this. The A.T.J. noted the narrowing of compositors' interests, and when the P.T.J. attempted to rouse some interest in the Workers' Educational Association, it was careful to point out that the courses were 'practical'. The P.T.J.'s own prose style reflected the increasing poverty of the compositor's education: original metaphor and simile gave way to cliché, and literary allusion and quotation virtually disappeared.

But compared with the sums earned by the metropolitan daily Linotype operator, the income of the hand compositor was small and his incentives to sobriety and improvement less immediate. When Linotype machines were first installed, the typographical societies began by opposing the proprietors' proposal that they be worked on piece rates, but eventually conceded their right to determine the method of payment. As the machines improved, and the operators became more proficient, so the piece rates returned better wages. In 1901, when the average wage paid to males in Melbourne's manufacturing industries was £1.14s.8d.<sup>1</sup> the operators at the Age were averaging between £5 and £6 a week each.<sup>2</sup> By 1926, operators on the Melbourne Herald were averaging between £12 and £13<sup>3</sup> when the average wage payable to adult males for a full week's work was a good deal less than half this amount.<sup>4</sup> Like the 'whips' among the newspaper compositors in the 1850s, these men were the highest-paid of all artisans. Their relative wage position was in fact far better, and unlike the newspaper compositors of seventy years before, they worked shorter hours than almost anyone else.<sup>5</sup>

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1

P.G. Macarthy, 'Wages and Employment Experience of Australian Wage Earners', Table I. Juniors are included.

2

'Application by the Printing Trade for a Special Board for Letterpress Printing'.

3

P.T.J., Vol.X, No.1, January 1926, pp.6 and 71. The Herald average earnings were the highest, but some operators on other dailies earned the Herald average and more.

4

The adult male average weekly wage in Victoria was £4.17s.2d. in the week ending 31 December 1925.

5

Most operators in Sydney and Melbourne worked 40 hours or less in 1927. In Sydney, they normally worked a five day week, and enjoyed three weeks' paid annual leave.

These men exercised an intensely conservative influence on the societies' policy, and supplied some of their most conspicuously separatist leaders. Newspaper men were the main objectors to the Labor Daily levies in Melbourne and Adelaide; W.W.C. Middleton, sometime President of the N.S.W.T.A., a Liberal Party supporter, and consistent opponent of any militant or joint trade union action, was a Linotype operator at the Daily Telegraph and Father of its Chapel. He and his colleagues exercised an influence out of proportion to their small numbers, and compositors on dailies in other cities were similarly powerful in the affairs of their societies.

By the time the societies began to admit other workers in the printing industry to membership, successive agreements with newspaper proprietors had already made newspaper compositors the best-rewarded of all wage earners. Court awards and wages board determinations had helped make composing in jobbing offices a better-paid and more secure occupation than it had ever been before. Together, jobbing and newspaper compositors made up nearly the whole membership of the typographical societies; and when the societies began to admit other workers in the printing industry, they took in the new men under such conditions that they could become competitors neither for the compositor's job nor for his position of political authority within his society. Compositors made the rules of the Printing Industry Employees' Union; as men powerful within the new organization, they sought to use it as a means of protecting their considerable privileges, and avoiding broader policies that would entangle them in alliances with other unions and involve them in strikes which might void agreements and awards.



But there were other forces which influenced members of the Union to think of themselves as part of a working class involved in a struggle with Capital. Conscription was for many of them a plot to force workers to fight the capitalists' war. Inflation affected the value of all wages governed by Awards, including those of all compositors not employed on daily newspapers. Strikes were in vogue, and they won some spectacular successes for members of other unions, and for the Union's own members in Western Australia. Mass trade union action for objectives so obviously desirable as the 44 hour week had an appeal that Boards of Management could not resist.

By 1927, some long-term processes had inclined printers towards working-class affiliation. Free compulsory education and the narrowing of the compositor's tradition of self-improvement removed one of the distinctions between typographical craftsmen and other tradesmen. As the Chapel became more an agent of the Union, and the pace of work speeded up with the spread of the Linotype machine, so the compositor lost his distinctive speech, and his distinctive customs. As the size of the printing shop began to increase,<sup>1</sup> so more journeymen lost their intimate contact with the master. From 1916 onwards, compositors

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<sup>1</sup>

Small, medium-sized and large printing establishments, N.S.W.: number of hands employed as percentage of workforce, 1901-27.

	20- Hands	21-100 Hands	101+ Hands
1901	34.5	25.5	40.0
1906	35.6	22.1	42.3
1911	26.5	31.2	42.3
1913	23.7	33.6	42.7
1918-19	24.5	31.0	44.5
1921-22	23.2	31.9	44.9
1924-25	23.5	34.0	42.5
1927-28	22.1	35.8	42.1

Source: Statistical Registers

were a minority in a union that included thousands who would never have a chance of establishing their own business, had not been indentured apprentices, had no acquaintance with the ancient mysteries of the craft, and earned comparatively low wages.

The structure and policy of the Union in 1927 was a compromise of forces seeking conservation of privilege, and those seeking action more broadly based. The P.I.E.U.A. called itself an industrial union, but its structure did not give equal weight to the industrial sections within it. It secured a series of awards that improved the wages and conditions of newly-admitted section, but preserved the supremacy of typographical workers. It supported the Labor Party, not for the purpose of making or unmaking social conditions, but as a means to the adjustment of labour legislation. It committed itself to the policy of arbitration, but supported strikes when they occurred. Its leaders analysed contemporary society in class terms, but with rhetoric increasingly hollow.

## APPENDIX A

UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG MEMBERS OF THE N.S.W.T.A. AND M.T.S.  
1890-93

In the depression of the nineties, both the Melbourne Typographical Society and the N.S.W. Typographical Association operated almost the same scheme of unemployment benefit. Both paid up to 12 shillings a week for a maximum of ten weeks of the year to those who had been financial members for more than 12 months, and out of work for a week. The M.T.S. allowed its members to draw their benefit in ten consecutive weeks if they wished, but the N.S.W.T.A. limited its members to a maximum of five weeks benefit in any one half-year. A member of the N.S.W.T.A. who drew full benefit for three successive half-years could claim only half benefit in the next two.

Since we know the membership of both societies, or can estimate it with fair accuracy, we can construct the following tables from data in the N.S.W.T.A. Unemployment Register, and stray entries in the Australian Typographical Journal and Half-Yearly Reports.

TABLE I

UNEMPLOYED BENEFIT EXPENDITURE PER HEAD OF MEMBERSHIP, N.S.W.T.A. AND M.T.S.

	<u>N.S.W.T.A.</u>			<u>M.T.S.</u>			Ratio M.T.S. to N.S.W.T.A.
	Benefit* (£'s)	Membership <sup>✓</sup>	Expenditure per Member (£'s)	Benefit (£'s)	Membership <sup>✓</sup>	Expenditure per member (£'s)	
1890	354	946	.37	345	1450	.23	.62:1
1891	380	976	.39	415	1250	.33	.85:1
1892	518	993	.52	1542	996	1.55	2.98:1
1893	620	984	.63	1546	860	1.80	2.85:1

\* This amount is the sum the N.S.W.T.A. would have paid had its rules been identical with those of the M.T.S., and had not reduced by half the benefit payable to those who had drawn full benefit in three successive half-years.

✓ The figure for the M.T.S. in 1893 is an estimate, but all others have been obtained from June Half-Yearly Reports, or membership lists issued with them.

TABLE II

## MEMBERS OF THE N.S.W.T.A. UNEMPLOYED FOR A MINIMUM OF SIX WEEKS IN EACH HALF-YEAR

Half Year Ended	Number Receiving Full Benefit	Number Debarred by Rule from Full Benefit	Total Unemployed For Minimum of Six Weeks	Membership* Membership*	Percentage Membership Unemployed for Minimum of Six Weeks
30 June 1890	42	-	42	946	4.4
31 December 1890	40	-	40	961	4.2
30 June 1891	27	4	31	976	3.2
31 December 1891	46	5	51	985	5.2
30 June 1892	62	1	63	993	6.3
31 December 1892	76	3	79	989	8.0
30 June 1893	56	11	67	984	6.8
31 December 1893	79	12	91	949	9.6

\* December figures have been estimated by averaging figures for the June before and the June after.

By subtracting the numbers employed on newspapers, and permanently at the Government Printing Office, we can estimate the number of members who were employed in the jobbing trade. Membership lists show exactly who were employed in newspaper offices, and unemployment among them was so slight as to be negligible. The lists do not separate permanents from casuals at the Government Printing Offices, but since 62 members are listed as being employed there throughout the period, it seems reasonable to assume that they were permanent staff. We can therefore estimate the degree of unemployment in the Sydney jobbing trade:

TABLE III

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF N.S.W.T.A. COMPOSITORS UNEMPLOYED IN THE SYDNEY JOBBING TRADE

Half-Year Ending	Membership*	Permanent at G.P.O.	Employed in Newspaper Offices	Number Employed in Jobbing Offices	Number Unemployed Minimum of Six Weeks	Percentage of Jobbing Trade Unemployed
30 June 1890	946	62	379	505	42	8.3
31 December 1890	961	62	379	505	40	7.9
30 June 1891	976	62	378	536	31	5.8
31 December 1891	985	62	377	546	51	9.3
30 June 1892	993	62	375	556	63	11.3
31 December 1892	989	62	384	543	79	14.5
30 June 1893	984	62	394	528	67	12.7
31 December 1893	949	62	355	532	91	17.1

\* As for Table II.

Since the M.T.S. Unemployment Register for 1890-93 has not survived, it is not possible to construct detailed tables of unemployment among M.T.S. members. A Half-Yearly Report however tells us that 120 members received maximum benefit for the half-year ending 30 June 1893. If we assume that M.T.S. members were distributed among the different sections of the printing industry in the same proportions as N.S.W.T.A. members, this means that 26 per cent of the Society's jobbing office compositors were unemployed for a minimum of six weeks in that half-year.

In the same half-year, the N.S.W.T.A. spent 77 per cent of the total spent on unemployment benefit in payments to those entitled to maximum benefit. The corresponding figure for the M.T.S. was 88.9 per cent. In the first half of 1893, unemployment not only affected a greater proportion of M.T.S. members, but it was more chronic in its nature.



## APPENDIX B

NEWSPAPER AND COMMERCIAL HAND COMPOSITORS' WAGES IN THE CAPITAL CITIES, OCTOBER 1913,COMPARED WITH THEIR SYDNEY EQUIVALENTS

City	Index** Number, Cost of Living	Money Wage, Morning Daily (shillings)	Equivalent// Wage, Sydney Rate	Difference	Money Wage Commercial Offices (shillings)	Equivalent// Wage, Sydney Rate	Difference
Sydney	1174	104*	104	-	65	65	-
Melbourne	1043	88*	92.4	- 4.4	66	57.7	+ 8.3
Brisbane	976	offices closed	"	-	56	54.0	+ 2.0
Adelaide	1092	80*	96.7	-16.7	60	60.5	- 0.5
Perth	1123	80 <del>4</del>	99.5	-19.5	65	62.2	+ 2.8

\* For 48 Hours. Actual rates were hourly rates.

// For 45 Hours. This was a weekly wage, and there was no hourly rate.

\*\* The Index Series used is that of the Commonwealth Statistician for Food, Groceries, and Rent (all houses), weighted average of the six capitals for 1911 = 1,000, quoted in Anderson, The Fixation of Wages, p.244.

// The 'Equivalent Wage, Sydney Rate' has been calculated by multiplying the money wage by the ratio of the index number of the city concerned to the index number for Sydney.

When interpreting this Table, it is necessary to remember that

(I) Wage rates were adjusted at different times in the different capitals. Since wages and prices were rising between 1911 and 1913, time lags partly account for disparity between wage rates.

(II) In all capitals except Perth, newspaper compositors were paid by the hour. Not all of them worked 48 hours every week. The Perth compositors were not as far behind as the entry in the 'Difference' column suggests.

(III) The index numbers are for the fourth quarter, 1913. Opinions of laymen about rises and falls in the cost of living are generally formed over a fairly long period, and not necessarily with any precision. Taking the average index number for the whole year gives no truer measure, since some of the wages rates were not in force for the whole of 1913.

The Table can therefore be no more than an indication of the relative wage status of compositors in the various capitals at the time of the A.T.U. Triennial Conference of 1913.

# APPENDIX C

## The First Machine Composing Agreement

**This Agreement** made this twenty-fifth day of April, 1894, between the Directors of THE DAILY TELEGRAPH NEWSPAPER COMPANY (LIMITED) of the one part, and the NEW SOUTH WALES TYPOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION of the other part WITNESSETH that the following rates of pay and conditions of employment for compositors working the Linotype Machines in the production of THE DAILY TELEGRAPH newspaper as now agreed to, and as hereinafter printed, shall continue in operation and effect for not less than twelve months from date hereof:—

1. Compositors learning to work Linotype machines shall be paid one shilling and sixpence (1/6) per hour until such time as they become efficient operators, and it shall be within the discretion of the employer to remove the learner at any time he may see fit.

2. The standard of efficiency shall be the ability of the operator to set and correct an average of 7000 ens per hour, with the necessary capability to produce tabulated and other matter in a proper and workmanlike manner.

3. The rate of pay for efficient operators shall be 3d. per 1000 ens set and corrected, including in the cast-up all headlines, leads, or other additions made by the house, and measured according to the face of the letter. For tabulated matter: 2 columns to count one-third extra; 3 columns, one-half extra; 4 columns, double the ordinary rate.

4. The hours of composition shall be sufficient to make the average weekly earnings of the efficient operative staff at least four pounds four shillings (£4 4/-) without exceeding 48 hours' composition, and this amount shall be the minimum average pay. But this condition shall not apply to *grass hands employed temporarily by the house.*

5. In the event of the hours of composition for any week being insufficient to enable the staff to earn the average above stated, the employer shall make up such difference, and shall pay the same to the operators pro rata to their earnings. *Provided that operators on the machines shall not be required to make up the time aforesaid in composing matter for outside work not pertaining to the publication.*

6. Standing time to be paid for at full rate per hour. In standing time 10 minutes to be reckoned as a quarter of an hour, 20 minutes as half-an-hour, 35 minutes three-quarters of an hour, and 50 minutes as one hour. Standing time to be totalled up at the conclusion of each week's work.

7. All operators duly appointed to a machine, and all compositors duly appointed as permanent hands, shall be entitled to receive seven days' notice of dismissal, and shall be compelled to give similar notice of an intention to quit.

8. The rate paid for compositors engaged on time other than machines shall be one shilling and ninepence (1/9) per hour.

9. Machines to be cleaned by the house.

In the event of either party to this Agreement at the expiration of twelve months aforesaid desiring an amendment thereof, at least fourteen days' notice shall be given, and the proposed alterations shall be considered at a Conference representing both parties to this Agreement.

Signed on behalf of the said Company :

(Signed)

W. WYNNE,

(Stamp)

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH NEWSPAPER  
COMPANY, LIMITED.

Signed on behalf of the N.S.W. Typographical Association :

(Signed)

HENRY J. MASON, PRESIDENT

J. CHRIS. WATSON

A. LEAVER

E. HARRISON HURLEY, SECRETARY

## APPENDIX C

### THE FIRST MACHINE COMPOSING AGREEMENT

APPENDIX D

REPORT ON THE FORMATION OF A LINOTYPE  
SECTION

# APPENDIX D

## Report on the Formation of a Linotype Section

### NEW SOUTH WALES

# TYPOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION

#### MEMBERS ONLY.

The following Report of the Executive on the advisability of the formation of a Linotype Committee, proposed Rules for the same, and also a proposed News Machine Scale, having been adopted by the Board of Management (4th September, 1897), are, in accordance with resolution, submitted for consideration, and, if thought desirable, for amendment.

Attention is specially directed to Section 2 of the Report, and all amendments or suggestions should be forwarded in writing to the undersigned not later than Thursday, 16th instant.

By order,

E. HARRISON HURLEY,  
Secretary.

8th September, 1897.

#### CONFIDENTIAL—FOR REVISION.

### Report re Linotype Section and Scale.

#### TO THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.

GENTLEMEN,—

Your Executive have the honor to furnish their report in connection with the resolution carried 8th July, 1897:—

That the Executive be empowered to confer with Employers and Linotype Operators for the purpose of drawing up an Uniform Scale for Machine Work, and report to a future Board Meeting.

Also motion' of 17th July, 1897, re formation of a Linotype Section.

1. The assimilation of the different charges required in the formation of a Linotype Scale has been delayed on account of innovations introduced in the *Star* conflicting with

charges made on the *Daily Telegraph*, both offices working on piece. In the *Evening News* and *Town and Country Journal* the substitution of piece-work for a time system on the Machines has simplified the Scale to one of piece-work for the three offices now using Linotype Machines, and your Executive have accordingly drawn up a Provisional Scale which, if adopted, should meet all requirements for some time to come. The Scale has been compiled principally from the latest agreement made by the London Society of Compositors, with some few additions to meet local requirements, and the Operators on the *Evening News* and *Town and Country Journal* are now, with the concurrence of the Proprietary, working under similar conditions.

2. Your Executive suggest that, after revision by the Board, copies be forwarded to the Linotype Operators in the different offices for any desirable amendments, and that after arriving at an approximate opinion on all the clauses the Scale be submitted to the Newspaper Proprietors for approval.

3. On the subject of a Linotype or Machine Committee, your Executive are of opinion that the formation of such a Committee

## Report on the Formation of a Linotype Section

ld be judicious, provided that the Com-  
tee shall not have power to contravene the  
\* or Scale of Charges in any essential  
t. The following reasons are advanced  
your Executive for the formation of the  
mittee:—

1. That it would allow Operators to meet at stated periods and exchange opinions on matters directly affecting the Machine Operators.
2. To arrive at a mutual understanding with regard to charges, juvenile or other labor, and the upholding of the Association's Rules.
3. Prevention of non-unionists (or persons who have not served an apprenticeship to the trade) from operating on Machines in Union Offices.
4. To get back to the Association all previous members operating machines who have fallen into arrears &c.
5. For the benefits arising from mutual protection and of welding the members of the Association into a compact organization.

a connection with this important subject,  
ough the Linotype Operators have ex-  
ressed a desire for the formation of such a  
mittee or Section, your Executive have re-  
ved no suggestions as to what conditions,  
the Committee could be worked under, and  
e consequently had to evolve a preliminary  
is or mode of working, and in that respect  
re to submit the following Rules for re-  
on and adoption:—

### Proposed Rules—Linotype Committee. ✕

That Compositors being members of the N.S.W. Typographical Association employed as Operators on type-setting or line-casting machines may form a Committee to be known as the "Machine Composition Committee."

The objects of the Committee, which shall meet at stated periods, shall be to exchange opinions respecting matters directly affecting the Machine branch of the trade; to come to a mutual understanding with regard to charges and juvenile labor; to prevent non-unionists &c., from being employed in Union offices; mutual protection and the welding together of the whole of the members of the trade.

That such Committee may be called together in special meeting whenever the Executive of the Association deem it necessary; one-third of the total number of financial Operators on the Association's roll to form a quorum.

That the President of the Association, or in his absence a Vice-President, shall preside at such meetings.

That the Secretary of the Association shall keep the minutes and supply any information that may be useful to the meeting.

That any member of the Executive of the Association may be present and take part in the business of such meetings,

and vote upon resolutions placed before the Machine Committee.

7. That the minutes shall be read up at the monthly meetings of the Board of Management of the N.S.W. Typographical Association; but a special meeting of the Board may be called at the discretion of the Executive whenever the Machine Committee have business of special importance to place before the Board.
8. That the Machine Committee shall not, without the sanction of the Board, interview the employers upon questions affecting the whole of the Operators employed in the various offices.
9. That the Machine Committee may elect two Delegates to sit on the Board of Management of the Association.
10. That each Office having four machines in use may appoint one Board member, and an additional member for any number of machines over ten.
11. That Delegates to the Board of Management from the Machine Committee and Offices shall be paid the same as the other members of the Board.
12. That there shall be a Machine Vice-President of the Association.
13. That the Operators shall at all times endeavor to approach employers in a conciliatory manner with regard to any breach of the N.S.W. Typographical Association's Rules.
14. That the Operators shall safeguard their own and the Association's interests by preventing the employment of non-unionists, boys (unless apprentices on weekly newspapers in the last year of their time); support the Association in its efforts to maintain a uniform and fair wage for both day and night work; uphold the Rules of the Association as at present printed or amended, and give the Board and the trade generally the benefits of their experience and wisdom.
15. Should the Board and Committee be unable to decide any matter in dispute between the two bodies, the questions at issue shall be referred to a general meeting of the trade for settlement.
16. That all questions affecting the trade generally must be subject to the Rules of the Association, as they may be altered or amended from time to time by its members in meeting assembled.

On behalf of the Executive,

G. A. JONES, PRESIDENT.

### Proposed Machine News Scale—Morning, Evening, and other Newspapers.

1. All skilled Operators and Time-hands (as distinct from mechanics, machine attendants, or labourers) shall be Compositors and members of the New South Wales Typographical Association.
2. A probationary period of three months shall be allowed, the Operator to receive 1s. 6d. per hour during that period.

## Report on the Formation of a Linotype Section

3. All Compositors on evening papers to be guaranteed at least three hours per day; Operators and Compositors upon morning papers to be guaranteed at least four hours per night. All Machine Operators to be guaranteed a minimum of thirty hours per week?
4. Any Machine Hand required to go upon time to be paid 1s. 6d. per hour for day and 1s. 9d. per hour for night work. Journeymen Compositors shall be employed as Time-hands to compose matter foreign to the machines, rule and letter borders, &c. They shall be paid at the rate of 1s. 6d. per hour on evening and weekly papers; and shall be guaranteed 36 and 40 hours per week respectively. This regulation to apply only in case of emergency.
6. No man shall be permanently changed from machine to case, or *vice versa*, without a fortnight's notice.
6. The price for machine composition upon all newspapers shall be 3d. per 1000 ens, to be charged according to the face of the letter.
7. All lines cast by the machine to be charged as full lines; all tabular and other matter requiring justification to carry an extra proportional charge, according to the N.S.W. Typographical Association's Scale of Charges.
8. Matter requiring two bars to complete one measure (not being tabular matter) to be charged one-third extra; three, one-half extra; four or more, double.
9. All stoppages of five minutes and upwards "waiting for copy" to be charged cumulative at 1s. 6d. per hour.
10. A "take" on the machine to constitute not less than 12 lines, excepting special copy.
11. General heads of articles (whether in block or otherwise) and the rules after, rules in the middle of articles, half-doubles, or other rules at the end of articles, let-in blocks or woodcuts, are to be charged by the Operators. In permanently illustrated papers (recognized as such by the Executive of the N.S.W. Typographical Association) the House shall be entitled to all woodcuts or illustrative blocks, &c.
12. Stereotyped, process, or block advertisements to be charged by the Operator when first appearing, whether any composition is necessarily added or not.
13. Advertisements.—When the composition is wholly done by machine (with the exception of display lines, borders, &c.) the charges on advertisements shall be:—
  - I. Machine Operators to charge all advertisements when first appearing with or without the addition of machine composition. (?)
  - II. Ordinary charge only to be made on all advertisements containing machine-set matter, in which the House inserts display lines larger than provided by the machine matrices, or encases the matter in a border composed of rules, letters, &c.
- III. One-half extra to be charged on advertisements encased in borders when the Operator sets the border composed of either rules or letters.
- IV. When two-line matrices are dropped in they shall be charged one line extra for every 2 (two) two-line letter.
- V. Rules to advertisements and leads to be charged by the Operator.
- VI. Alterations in standing advertisements must be charged in lines; where such alterations affect more than half the length of the advertisement, if under twelve inches, or three-fourths if above twelve inches, the whole to be given out as ordinary copy. All extensions to standing advertisements, whether by "leading" or "whiting out," to be charged in lines by the Operator.
14. All headings composed by time hands for machine composition (whether in block or otherwise), rules, let-in blocks or woodcuts, and catch lines in such composition, are to be charged by the Operators. Leads used for the purpose of make-up to be the property of the House.
15. Matter of and above four lines composed in other than ordinary English (*i.e.*, dialects) to be charged one-half extra, and foreign languages double for each line.
16. Matter consisting of names run on and figures, abbreviations, &c., such as prize lists, balance-sheets, market quotations, and matter of a similarly disadvantageous character, to be charged one-third extra.
17. The usual price regulations as to bad copy or MS to apply to Operators; copy not properly sub-edited to rank as bad MS.
18. All first proof and revise corrections (marks left undone in the first proof) to be done by the Operator; all machine errors and house marks to be charged double.
19. If a machine is changed by order to a different type, the Operator shall not be required to change it again to make corrections, which shall be done by the Operator on a vacant machine, or by the House.
20. No Operator shall be asked to do engineer's or laborer's work.
21. In offices where case hands are employed on piece-work in conjunction with Machine Operators, all charges for hand composition shall be as provided for by the Scale of Charges of the N.S.W. Typographical Association.
22. Any matter not provided for in these Rules to be settled by reference to the rules obtaining in Sydney before the introduction of machine composition; and, failing finality there, to be settled by the custom adopted by the New South Wales Typographical Association.



## APPENDIX E

SMALL PROPRIETORS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE  
NEW SOUTH WALES PRINTING INDUSTRY WORKFORCE

Proprietors of establishments of four and fewer hands as a percentage of the workforce in books, paper and printing in N.S.W.

	Number of Proprietors	Workforce	% Proprietors
1901	60	5,573	1.1
1906	54	6,961	0.8
1911	123	9,134	1.3
1916-17	152	9,529	1.6
1921-22	145	11,282	1.2
1926-27	181	13,713	1.3

Source: Statistical Registers.

The Registers give only the number of establishments, and I assume that each had one proprietor. This is obviously false, but unless there was an extensive process of partners buying each other out, the percentage column remains a good index of the journeyman's chances of succeeding as a small proprietor in all years except 1916-17, and 1901. In these years unemployment among compositors was high, and several small 'masters' were probably desperate journeymen. In the other years, unemployment was fairly uniform and low. In using the table as an index of the journeyman's chances of succeeding in business for himself, I am also assuming that the number of journeymen who immediately became proprietors of establishments of more than four hands is negligible.

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